



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 13:1-9

“Israel’s National Cleansing”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re turning, for our study in the word of God today, and prior to that to the reading of Scriptures, to Zechariah chapter 13. So will you take your Bibles and turn with me to the 13th chapter, which we hope to cover in the ministry of the word in a few moments. Zechariah chapter 13, now remember that the prophet Zechariah in the latter half of his book, beginning at the 9th chapter, has set forth for us two great prophetic burdens. The first covers the first three chapters, 9, 10 and 11, the second prophetic burden, the last three chapters, 12, 13 and 14. And in this second burden, we have just read of the national conversion of Israel. And in the 13th chapter the prophet will continue and especially stress the cleansing that has come from the turning of heart of this nation. And so the 1st verse begins,

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou

speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. (of course the reference is to false prophecy in the latter days) And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? (it was of course the custom among many of the false prophets of the days past to mutilate themselves in various ways and this was of course, connected with their religion and with their false prophecies, and so that is the reference in the 6th verse; this does not have anything to do with the wounds of our Lord on Calvary’s cross) one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? (it looks as if you’re a prophet in other words) Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (in other words, I was injured in my home in my early days, now the prophet continues) Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.”

May God bless this reading of his word, let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful opportunity to come together and to listen to the word of the living God. We pray that there may be that same sentiment in our hearts that is expressed by the prophet Zechariah when he looks into the future, and says that the nation Israel shall say that this is my Lord. And we pray that as we gather and listen to the word of God, that in the hearts of

each one of us there shall be a responsiveness to the revelation contained in the Scriptures. We pray Lord for each one present. We would pray particularly for the men today, and ask Thy blessing upon them. And as they carry on their business, day after day, and week after week, and month after month, if it should please Thee oh God, we pray that Thou wilt prosper them in their businesses. That Thou wilt enable them to succeed and realize the honest ambitions of the human heart. And may their testimony for Jesus Christ be the kind of testimony that is attractive, and that attracts others to him.

We pray that Thou wilt give us the spirit, of being in touch with Thee in the midst of all of the daily round which faces each one of us. We pray for the women in this congregation and in their many activities, in their home and among their friends. And as they are in society we ask oh God, that there may be the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, redolent in their lives. And may others sense his presence in them. We pray for the young people, who have such wonderful futures before them. And we pray oh God, that their lives may be centered in the Lord Jesus. May he be given first place, and may in these days of learning, and growth to maturity, may there be the centering of the life in him in such a way that our values become values that honor him and honor Thee.

We pray that Thou wilt direct this congregation. We realize, Lord, that Thou hast great things for those who have named Thee as their God. And we know that as long as we are alive, everything is really optimistic. And so we pray that Thou wilt lay Thy hand upon Believers Chapel, upon the Christians who meet here. And may there be the sense of the presence of God in our meetings and also throughout this week, as in our many activities we seek to honor him. And bring in others to meet with us and enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ and his so great salvation, which he has given us. Father we thank Thee for the greatness of our Savior, and may we come to know him better, and to love him more. We ask in his name. Amen.

[Message] Now today we’re turning to the 13th chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah, and the subject is “Israel’s National Cleansing”. We have all been noting, and of course this has been the prime thrust of this series of messages, that there is an exciting and thrilling mood in Israel today. And as we see the things that have transpired in nineteen hundred and sixty seven, I think that many of us who are Christians, have certainly in our own hearts, felt something of the tug of passages of Scripture such as, “Lift up your hearts for your redemption draweth nigh.” We know that these great events that are transpiring in Israel today signal the fact that Jesus Christ’s coming may be near at hand. And of course if his coming for Israel and to accomplish the great things in connection with their salvation is not far in the future, that means of course, that for us who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and are in his church, that his coming in the air is that much closer. And so we look forward with a great deal of anticipation and excitement to the things that are happening and will happen in the future.

This past week I was reading something that appeared in *The Weekly Digest* a few years back. *The Weekly Digest* is a publication which is primarily economic, and commercial, and political, published in Britain, which is so far as I know, taken by all of the leading governments of the world and is a periodical which has a great deal of influence. I’d like to read just a few things that appeared, and this is before the recent war. But in this issue, of a few years ago, the writer of this particular political and economic letter of information wrote, “Amongst the strange signs of our times, none is more significant than the evolution of Israeli thinking about world affairs. Israel is the outstanding phenomenon of our times.

In Israel there is a growing sense of a prophetic mission. More and more Israel Jews now see themselves as fulfilling ancient biblical prophecies. More and more Jews in Palestine believe that no matter what the military odds may be, Israel is foreordained to both the inevitability of battle and victory.” And I’m just selecting some words from this particular issue, “In Israel, where the conviction of war protection and actual victory is

now so wide spread, there is a growing tendency actually to look for signs of a coming conflict rather than as in the west, to do the opposite.

Many in Israel are convinced of four things, which we in the west cannot bear to consider or if we do largely disbelieve. Israel believes in first, the certainty of war, second, the certainty of victory, third, protection from the popularly envisaged consequences of nuclear war, a future order of society under actual divine rule, a messianic era.” And furthermore, in it later on, the statement is made, “Not only is this believed,” that is Israel’s ultimate victory “but a growing number of Palestinian Jews believe that they will finally inherit the whole of the original area of the promise land. And will be supreme in world affairs as the leaders of world religious and cultural thought. Many believe that this will occur as the result of the coming of a personal Messiah, who will not only make Israel the world’s leading nation, but will be the true physical descendant of King David.” Things such as this, which appear in journals like that, certainly do signal a sense of excitement, not only among those of us who are evangelicals and interested in the biblical prophecies, but also in the world at large.

Now of course, there is a tragic deficiency in the thinking of Israel and in this mood. And that absence is the sense of the need for cleansing. In none of the literature, so far as I know, is there any inkling of the fact that in Israel, there is a sign that they feel that they are guilty before God, for the past, and that they are looking to God for spiritual cleansing. This is the one thing that is lacking, and of course it is the most important thing, so far as Israel’s attainment of the promises is concerned. We go back to the prophecies of the Old Testament, such as Leviticus chapter 26, and we read there in history that is prewritten, the story of Israel’s future. And in it God says that he’s going to bring the land into desolation, he says that, “Your enemies which dwell there in shall be astonished at the desolation of that land, and I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out a sword after you and your lands shall be desolate and your cities waste.” And of course, we know that this has come to pass. And furthermore, he goes on to say,

“And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.” And then as that prophecy draws nigh to its conclusion, the Holy Spirit through Moses says,

“If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with the trespass (singular, you will notice) with the trespass which they have trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I have also walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.”

And so the key thing is Israel’s recognition of the fact that they have sinned against God. It’s not enough for them to look into the future and say that God is going to give us the land, that God is going to give us victory, that we know we’re going to face a time of tribulation. But we’re going to come through it. And it’s not enough to say that we have confidence in God that we shall not be destroyed, in a nuclear age. It’s not enough to know all of these things. The basic thing that Israel needs to know is the fact that they have committed a grievous trespass against God in their participation in the death of the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ. And until the day comes when they acknowledge what they have done, there is no hope for the fulfillment of these promises for Israel.

Now we noticed last Sunday morning, as we studied the 12th chapter, that Israel is going to come to this conviction. They’re going to, as the Lord pours out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications. “They’re going to look unto me, whom they have pierced,” Zechariah says, “and they’re going to mourn for him (that is the Lord of hosts) as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in

bitterness for his firstborn.” There is coming a day when Israel is going to have a change of heart. And when that change of heart comes, then there is going to be the forgiveness that God has promised in the word of God for them. In that day, that one day, the iniquity of the land shall be cleansed.

Now that is the thing that Zechariah expands upon in the 13th chapter. He really takes that little clause of the 3rd chapter in the 9th verse, in which he speaks of the day when the land is to be purged, and now he expands it in the 13th chapter and gives us some further details. There is the closest connection between chapter 12 and chapter 13. We have just read, “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” national repentance is to be followed by national cleansing. And the people are to be cleansed because they have recognized that they have pierced the Lord of hosts. Now the piercing of course is an ultimate reference to the Roman soldiers when they pierced the side of our Lord Jesus and there forthwith came out blood and water. And when Israel realizes what they have done, then they shall look off and joyfully behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. They will also see the brazen serpent who has been lifted up for their sins that they might live. They shall see the sin offering fulfilled in the sacrifice of the Son of God. And Zechariah begins by prophesying then, this national cleansing. “In that day, there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” By the way, that word “fountain” in the Hebrew text is a word that comes from a word that means to dig out. And so the fountain is something that is dug out, something that is pierced. And it is a direct reference to chapter 12 and verse 10, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced” and it is out of the pierced side of our Lord Jesus, and the blood that was shed, that the fountain is constructed. And by reason of that death, there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

We are inclined to look at the 13th chapter and the 1st verse as if that fountain is to be opened in the future. I do not really think that is the ultimate meaning of

Zechariah. I’m inclined to think that what he is saying is that, while the fountain has been opened at the past, nineteen hundred years, plus, years ago, the experience of the benefits of that opening lie in the future. And that is what he means when he says, “In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David” that fountain was opened on Mount Golgotha. That fountain was opened so many years ago when Jesus died. But they experience the benefits of that fountain in the future. And so Zechariah writes in that way.

If I may illustrate it from Scripture, do you remember the experience that Hagar had when she was cast out by Abraham? Do you remember that when Abraham’s son Isaac had reached the age that he was to be weaned from his mother, Abraham had a great feast for Isaac. And at the time of the feast Ishmael, the other son, the son of Hagar was mocking Isaac. And Sarah was a great, disturbed quite a bit over the fact that the bond woman’s son was mocking her son, the one in whom the promises were. And so she went to Abraham and she asked Abraham to cast out the bond woman with her child. Women can be very cruel now. And anyway, the result of this was that Abraham was somewhat disturbed, you remember. And he went to God about it and God said, “Sarah’s right” and that’s the way it often happens men, they were right. [Laughter] And so, Hagar and Ishmael are cast out.

And you remember that Hagar took a piece of bread, or a loaf of bread, and she took some water and she went out into the dessert. And finally, when she had come to the end of her provisions, she sat down with her infant child, and she put her infant child over under, a little bush in order that the sun might not beat down upon him. And she herself went off about the distance of a bow shot, Moses says, because she didn’t want to watch her child die. And then we read in the text of Scripture that God heard the cry of the child. And that he came to Hagar and he said to her, “Hagar, I’m going to give you provision” and the text of Genesis chapter 21 reads something like this, I think I want to look at it and read that verse, because to tell you the honest truth I’ve forgotten the exact

wording of it. And we read in the 19th verse, “And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with the water, and gave the lad drink.” Now you’ll notice the wording, “And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.” Now are we being farfetched if we suggest that that well was there all along? But she did not see it. God had prevented her from seeing it. And so now God opens her eyes so that she sees what has been there all along. And so she takes the water and she nourishes the child and ultimately, out of the child there came a great nation, as God had prophesied.

Now at something like that, so far as Calvary is concerned, the fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened hundreds of years ago, down through the years, those upon whose hearts the Holy Spirit hath moved, has moved, have come to believe and come to know this opening of the fountain and they have come to know the cleansing from sin and uncleanness. It has been open to Israel all along. But they do not recognize it. They are blind to the facts that are right before their eyes, just as Hagar to the well that was before hers. But in the future when they have come to recognize their guilt before God, when they confess their iniquity, God is going to remove the blindness of the eyes and the hardness of the heart of Israel and they are going to see what has been there all along. And then the fountain shall be opened in the sense that they shall come to it, recognize it, and they themselves in it, and receive cleansing from sin and uncleanness. So Zechariah has given us here a glorious promise, and prophecy of national cleansing.

Now in the next few verses he speaks about the fact that when Israel’s national cleansing comes, the false prophets are going to be cut off from the land. Idolatry and false prophecy is to go. Now when we read this prophecy in the light of the completed revelation of God, we know that in the last days the height of idolatry and the height of false prophecy will come when the beast arises, and the second beast, to is his lieutenant, who organizes all of the worship of the world, and directs it toward the worship of the Antichrist. We know that that man, that second beast, is called in the book of Revelation,

The False Prophet. He is the one who is the antitype of all of the types of the Old Testament. And we know of course, that one of the things that he shall do shall be to set up an image to the first beast and make it obligatory for all of the peoples of the world to worship the beast who is the universal ruler and the head of universal religion.

Now in the days of the second coming of our Lord Jesus, all of that system which has been instituted by antichrist and has been served by the second beast, the false prophet, shall be done away with. And I think that probably these verses have their ultimate reference in that. You will notice he says, “And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.” In fact, it is going to be so wonderful in that day, that it’s going to be very, very much out of style to be a false prophet. And those who have that spirit in that day are going to be ashamed of the fact that they are false prophets. For when men come to them and say, “I think you’re a false prophet.” They’re going to say, “No I’m not a false prophet at all.”

And furthermore, they’re not even going to wear the garments that mark them out as false prophets. You see, it was the custom for prophets to wear cloaks about their shoulders made out of the hairs of skins of animals. Elijah had one, remember, Elijah had one. The prophets of the Old Testament, that was their mark, they wore that mantle about their shoulders. It was the sign that they belonged to God. And of course, if you wanted to be a false prophet, that’s what you would do, you would get yourself a mantle. Just as today if you want to be known, well I better not talk about that, [Laughter] but anyway, there is of course today, some outward signs that some men put on to indicate that they belong to the Lord too. But in that day it’s going to be so unpopular that men are not going want to be known as a false prophet. And some of them who have mutilated their hands in token, in taking part in their false religion, are going to have people come to them and say, “Well what are those wounds? You say you’re not a false prophet, what about the signs of the false prophet in your hands?” “Well that happened to me when I was a little child, I had an accident at home” they’re going to say. So

Zechariah then prophesies of this wonderful day when Israel shall receive its national cleansing and when the idols and the false prophets and all of that anti-God worship shall pass out of the land.

Now in the 7th verse, we come to the second major theme of this section, which is the means of national cleansing. After all, we must have a righteous basis for cleansing. And so in the 7th verse Zechariah prophesies of the death of the Messiah again. And he presents it from the standpoint of God. You see, in the 12th chapter it has been from the standpoint of man, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. And they shall mourn for him” but now it is from the standpoint of God. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts:” and of course the reference to the shepherd of God is the reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the good shepherd; he came to exercise that ministry in his first coming. He came in order that he might call the sheep out of the sheep fold to follow him. He went in among the sheep fold of Israel, John tells us in the 10th chapter, in the parable that Jesus told. He walked through the door, who was the porter, John the Baptist. He went in among the sheep and he gave the call to them. “I am the Messiah, the son of God.” Those who responded walked out after him and he went out before them. They recognized his voice. Those who did not come remained in the sheep fold of Israel, which was destined to judgment. And so the shepherd came. And since it was God’s will that the shepherd should die for the sins of men, Jesus Christ ultimately went to the cross at Calvary and under the hand of God, suffered for the sins of men. “It pleased the Lord to bruise him,” Isaiah the prophet stated. And here it is written from that same standpoint, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts:”

This last week I read a story of John Nelson Darby, and some of his pastoral ministry. He was in Ireland, and one day he was called upon to go out to visit a young boy, who was a shepherd boy, who was on his death bed. He said he went out and he

went up to a little village and finally he found the place and when he found the place it was just a little barn. And he went in and the mother was there and the child was over in the corner. He said he didn’t know exactly what he could say to this child. And he went over and looked at him and he looked so pitiful, that when he sat down he just offered a prayer to God and asked God to direct him to say something that might be of use to the young child who was destined to die soon. And he first of all, said a few words about the gospel of Jesus Christ and he got no response at all. He said he lifted his heart again to God and asked that he might have just something with which to make contact. As he spoke about the gospel, the young boy didn’t seem to understand at all.

Finally he looked at him and he said, “You know, it’s a rather strange thing that you, a carry boy, should be so unhealthy. How did you happen to get into your condition?” And the boy spoke up, he said, “Well it was some days ago, but one of our sheep” he said, “You know Daddy has a few sheep out on the hills, and one of the sheep was lost. And he asked me if I would go out after the sheep.” And he said, “I went out after the sheep, and it was cold and it began to snow.” And he said, “Finally, I found the sheep. And I brought the sheep home. But in the bringing the sheep home, I contracted the cold. And now I’m about to die for what I did.” And Mr. Darby of course, recognized immediately that this was the story of the gospel, really. And so he began to speak about the Lord Jesus as the great shepherd, who went out after the lost sheep. And he spoke about how he finally went to the cross at Calvary and gave up his life in order that the sheep might live. And the little boy responded. And finally when he brought home to him the fact of what Jesus Christ had done for him, the little boy believed in the good shepherd who died for the sheep.

You know it’s wonderful to know we have such a shepherd. And it’s wonderful to know that it is the Father who is responsible ultimately, for the death of Christ, for it was no accident. It was the divine will; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, because that great heart of love in heaven desires that all men come to him, and to faith in the

shepherd. Don’t you know what it cost God to prophesy through the prophet Zechariah, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow.” And you know, I’m a sheep too, and I need a shepherd. In our Sunday night meeting last week, Gardner Michaels stood up in the meeting and, he commented upon the fact that in the Bible we are called sheep.

And he said it was very appropriate that we were. He said, “The Lord doesn’t call us lions, because we’re weak. And he doesn’t call us owls or serpents, who are wise, because we’re dumb. And he doesn’t call us cats or dogs, who can find their way back, because we lose our way. And sheep lose their way. Sheep are weak, sheep are stupid, and sheep lose their way. And isn’t it appropriate that the word of God should speak of us as sheep. But it’s wonderful to have a shepherd who knows how to find us, who has all of the wisdom that we need, and also all of the strength that we need.” Sometimes in our meetings on Sunday night we sing a hymn, which has a stanza that goes like this, “Jehovah bade His sword awake; O Christ, it woke ’gainst Thee! Thy blood the flaming blade must slake; Thy heart its sheath must be; All for my sake, my peace to make; Now sleeps that sword for me.” “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts:”

Now as most of you know, I know a little Hebrew. And I want to just comment on one word, it’s the word “fellow”. Lots of students have commented upon it. It’s a word that in Hebrew means, “an equal”. In fact, it’s almost an equivalent for the word ach in Hebrew, which means “brother”. And so when we read here, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow,” it is the man who is the equal of God, the man who is the brother of God, or like a brother. It is a reference to the deity of our Lord Jesus. The shepherd is a man, but he is also a god. He’s the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the text says that, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:” And in the last supper, you’ll remember when the disciples left having sung the

hymn, they went out and the Lord Jesus referred to this passage and he said, as he referred to it, that, “God said I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” And of course that’s what happened, they were scattered. When the cross of Calvary took place, where was Peter, where was strong Peter? He was in hiding. Where was John? Well he was there for a while. But where were the rest of them? They all forsook him and fled, the Scriptures said. And so when the shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered. And then the text says, “And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” I think that probably is the re-gathering of the remnant after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in Galilee, and of course a reference down through the years, to the care of God for them. Now that’s disputed. Some Hebrew scholars say that this means judgment, that he is going to judge, and that would fit the sense too. But I’m inclined to take it the other way.

But let’s look on to the end of our chapter, because having prophesied of this national cleansing and having suggested the means of it in the death of the shepherd, now in the last two verses the prophet speaks about the path to national cleansing. Now when we read the Old Testament, we have to learn a principle or two, and remember I’ve said it over and over again, but it’s good to keep repeating it, and you know one of the reasons I repeat it is not because you forget it, but because I forget it too. We are inclined to forget as we read the Old Testament that sometimes a thousand or two years may elapse between verses. For in the Old Testament they did not have the chronological view of things that we have now. And so between the 7th and the 8th verses, there lies the present age in which we are living, an age that was made necessary because Israel did not respond to the sufferings at the cross at Calvary. And so now in the 8th verse, we move on to the process whereby God is going to regain his people for himself, and we read, “It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.”

There is going to be Great Tribulation in the future. And the purpose, one of the great purposes of the tribulation, is that Israel might be purged amidst those judgments and be brought back to faith in God. But many of the present Israelites today shall never come to know Jesus Christ as Savior. They shall not respond. It will be necessary for the judgments to act as a purgative in Israel itself. And among the judgments there will be some who turn, in fact Zechariah says a third will turn, but two thirds will not. So you see it is not true to say that all of Israel shall be saved. We know that is not true. When Paul says that all Israel shall be saved, he means Israel as a nation shall be saved. And it is all Israel when Jesus Christ returns. But on the way to that great event and the national repentance and cleansing, the great majority of the Jewish nation shall fall under the judgments of God. So he speaks here of the great tribulation in the 8th verse. He speaks specifically, of the purification in the 9th verse, he says, “I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:” this is the great day of Israel’s trouble. It’s the time of Jacob’s trouble, and it’s the time when they shall be purged.

You remember last year when we were talking about basic Bible doctrine, I told you a true story of a ladies meeting in the city of Dublin, when they were studying the prophecy of Malachi. And they came to the 3rd chapter of Malachi, and that text, which is so prominent in Handel’s Messiah, where we read, it’s the 3rd verse of Malachi 3, where we read, “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, (every time I read that I think of the tune of the Messiah) he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” And as these women were studying this passage of Scripture, they delegated one of their members to go to a refiner of silver and to investigate the process, because they thought that by investigating the process, they might learn something of what the text of Scripture means when it says that he shall purify them. And so one of them went to a silversmith in the city, and asked him a few things about his work. And

he went on to say that he put his silver, of course, over in the crucible and he sat by the side of it and as the heat rose, he watched the silver very carefully.

As a matter of fact, the woman said, “Do you sit while the work of refining is going on?” and he said, “Oh yes, madam, I must sit with my eyes steadily fixed on the crucible, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver is sure to be injured.” And that is of course, a picture of the care with which God purges Israel. You see, Israel too, belongs to the Lord, and those chosen ones that belong to the nation are subject to the care of God. And amidst the great tribulation, judgments of the future, it is not a picture of an angry God who is just pouring out willy-nilly judgments upon men...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]

...through ones who belong to him and who shall respond shall be destroyed. And she was much impressed by what the man said and she turned to go home because she had learned a lesson that she could bring to her friends. And as she went out, the man spoke out to her quite loudly and said to her, “And also, don’t fail to mention to them, that I know when the process of refining is completed. I know the completion of it, when I can see my own image reflected in the silver.”

And of course, that is really what happens when God refines us, isn’t it? He sends us through a lot of experiences. He shall send Israel through tremendous experiences until he can look in the nation Israel and see that Israel is really “my son”, as Israel was called, a picture of Jesus of Nazareth. And isn’t it going to be wonderful to look at the Jewish people, mind you, and to see in the Jewish people, Jesus Christ. Can you see it today? No you couldn’t possibly see it today. He’s not there. A proud, stiff-necked people; there is hardly a prouder or stiff-necked people in the world, unless we look at the Gentiles. [Laughter] But the day is coming when we shall look at Israel and

we shall see Jesus Christ. Now that of course, which is done in the nation, is done individually in every Christian too. And the reason that we pass through the trials and sufferings and tragedies that we do pass through, is not that God might just see how much we can take. But he has an aim in mind. He is bringing us to the likeness of Jesus Christ. And he's sitting by the crucible, and he's very much concerned, he's very careful. Every little thing that happens to Lewis Johnson, my Father in heaven knows. And he watches, and he doesn't allow the heat to get too intense, because he might disturb the silver. And he waits, and he waits, and he waits, and as the dross is taken off, finally he can look down and see Jesus Christ. I wonder if he will ever reach that sometimes, but he is going to reach the day when he can look at me and he can see Jesus Christ, and so likewise in you.

Now you know, it's been my privilege to speak to you for a long time, and I've grown to love all of you in this congregation. And I want to just tell you something personal. I don't think I've ever been associated with a finer group of people, than those in Believers Chapel. And I want you to know that you have often touched my heart, as I have thought about you, and especially as I've seen the evidence in the lives of so many of you, of the fact that God is working. And that you are becoming more and more like him. And as I look out on this audience this morning, and notice some of the new couples that have come in our fellowship, and the new ones that have come in only in the last six months, you've made a great contribution to us. And we hope that together, we can of course, as God disciplines us and fits us, become more like him. But I see God working in this congregation. I see it in your life, and I see the evidence of the presence of Jesus Christ, and you know it's a thrilling thing.

This past week end I went out to Midland, in fact I left after classes of Friday afternoon, flew out to Midland, had a two hour session, two messages on Friday night, and then yesterday afternoon another two hour session, a long message. I spoke for an hour and fifteen minutes, I'm not going to do that today, but I spoke for an hour and

fifteen minutes, we had a short break and then questions for another, well until two hours were taken up, then last night again, a two hour session. We had a wonderful time, just thirty or forty people, but in Midland they are interested in seeing a new work established for God.

Do you know who's the leader of it? A man, well one of the leaders, a man whose wife was converted by the testimony of someone in this congregation, and who himself found the Lord here in the city of Dallas, as a matter of fact, right on Midway Road, down the way a little, in the corner of a church auditorium. As a matter of fact, when he went in among the congregation he was a member of the Church of Christ, grown up with that background. I can remember calling on him with not a great deal of hope. And finally, one morning, they used to refer to him in the church as "What, you mean Hap Weaver, oh that's the fellow that looks as if his wife's brought him to church?" [Laughter]. And so one morning, he made the decision, accepted the Lord as his Savior. And now the tremendous transformation that has occurred in that man, you can see the presence of the Lord in him. It's a thrilling thing. And this is the kind of thing that God is doing, and he's doing it in this congregation.

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: (and then notice the climax) and they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." There is the great national Day of Atonement, when Israel shall be reconciled to their God, who has always loved them and desired that they come to him. What a tremendous change is going to take place when Israel shall turn and look at the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, acknowledge that they have crucified him, and shall mourn for him and shall turn to God in heaven and say, "It is my God, it is my Lord, the Lord, the Lord Jehovah is my God." What a difference it makes when this is personal, the Lord is my God. Can we say that this morning?

I sat down in that home, and I was with the Weavers this weekend, I sat down in the home and it was a positively thrilling thing, this man is, I don’t, I don’t really know how old he is, he’s a very old man he’s at least as old as I am. [Laughter] And to hear him talk about my Lord, and that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and the term, do you know, he’s even preparing messages, studying the word, has a tape recorder, plays his own messages back so he can correct his diction, and also his homiletics. Now this is something that God has done. And to hear him speak about my Lord, and my Savior, is really a thrilling thing. And in the future it’s going to be that way.

Thomas Chalmers was one of the greatest of the Scottish preachers. He preached for many years a cold, dry, formal system of truth that didn’t mean anything to him. And then he said the south winds of God blew upon his soul, and he said afterwards, “Mathematician that I was, I had forgotten two great facts, two great magnitudes; the shortness of time and the vastness of eternity.” And finally, he came to that sense of having a personal God and in having a personal God, the whole church was transformed, and as a matter of fact, all of Scotland was touched by the ministry of Thomas Chalmers. There’s one of the psalmists who says, “Oh Lord, Thou art my God.” and how important that is.

I told you a long time ago of the story of another little shepherd boy. The Scottish minister came to the home and was teaching him the Lord is my shepherd. He couldn’t seem to get it over to the boy, and the boy would just repeat back to him, the Lord is my shepherd, and finally, the minister said, “Look it’s like this,” he said, “take your finger and put it on your thumb and repeat after me. The Lord is my” and he said, “grasp that fourth finger to signify that you want to put a little emphasis there. The Lord is my shepherd.” And he finally got the boy to say, “The Lord is my shepherd” and was shortly after that that the family noticed that he was missing one afternoon. They went out looking for him and, they went out to a place where there was a cliff on the land, and they looked down at the bottom and there was the little boy. He obviously had fallen off the cliff. They

rushed down and he was breathing his last breath. But they saw something that gave them a great deal of encouragement in the midst of the tragedy. The little boy had his hand around the fourth finger of his hand. He was saying as he died, "The Lord is my shepherd." Isn't that a wonderful text, "I will say it is my people and they shall say the Lord is my God."

Now I close this morning with just a few notes on the practical side, by way of application. You see a fountain for sin and uncleanness has been opened. How sad if there is a fountain, that you still die unwashed. If there's a Savior, how wretched it is to die without him. Zechariah says it's a fountain, he doesn't say it's a cistern. He doesn't say it's a reservoir, he says it's a fountain it's something that bubbles up constantly. There is continual provision, the fountain of the cross at Calvary. And furthermore, he says it has been opened, it is accessible. It is approachable by us and it is approachable directly. You don't have to go through me, you don't have to go through the church, you don't have to go through the priest. You may go directly, oh the insanity of people who will not go to this fountain that has been opened. Some who say, "Well I'm a sinner," that's like standing by a bath tub and you're very dirty and you're saying, "I don't think I can take a bath because I'm so dirty." Or perhaps you might say, "Well I am not one of the elect" that's like again, when this fountain has been open for sin and uncleanness to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of all of that area, it is universal in its provision.

And finally you'll notice it's for sin and uncleanness. It's not for Baptists, it's not for Presbyterians, it's not for Methodists, it's not for those that are good, it's not for those that are sweet, it's not for those that are righteous, it's for those who have recognized the one condition of life that makes us fit to plunge ourselves in the fountain. It is for those who know that they are sinners and that they are unclean before God. And so this morning, I want to call upon you, if you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ, to recognize first of all, that you are before God unrighteous, and you need a fountain. You need a fountain for your sin and you need a fountain for your uncleanness. And I want

you to recognize that that fountain has been opened. And it’s a fountain and it’s just as available today, it’s still bubbling up with the waters of cleansing down through the centuries, and it is just as available today as it ever has been. And if you’re in the audience and you’ve never believed in Jesus Christ, let me remind you that he suffered and he died, and the way of salvation is open for you. Do you know what you have to do? All you have to do is in your heart say, “Lord, I need a bath in the fountain. I take Christ as my personal Savior. And thank you that you cleanse me.” That’s all. May God speak to your heart, may the great transformation take place. And as you leave this morning, I hope you leave with a sense of the Lord is my God. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we are so grateful to realize that the fountain for sin and uncleanness has been opened nineteen hundred years ago. And we thank Thee that it still exercises its ancient power. And we pray oh God, for each member of this congregation, that if there is one single person, young or old, who has not yet come, may they come, may they receive everlasting life. And oh God, as the process of salvation works in the heart of those of us who have known him, as our great loving shepherd sits by the crucible, enable us to be subject to him. And may his work of bringing us into conformation to Jesus Christ be accomplished, to the glory of the one who loved us. And now may throughout the days of this week, our testimony of him, be attractive and persuasive. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.