



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior, Mark 15:24-32

"Golgotha"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] ...for the Scriptures, with anticipation. We recognize that in our Lord's saving work we have the consummation of the ages. And we pray that as we study, as we reflect upon his death for us and his life for us that the influences of it, the effects of it, and the purposes of it may become clean and clear to us.

We commit all who are present to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon them. Together may we honor and glorify him who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. And we would not close our prayer, Lord, without thanking Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enlightenment, in guidance, and also in conviction of sin and we thank Thee for him. And we pray that he, too, may minister to us through the word which he has inspired. For Christ's sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is "Golgotha" or "Adam and Christ." And we begin, again, with a few words of introduction after I read verses 24 through 32 of Mark chapter 15,

"And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots for them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the

superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed at him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross. So also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him."

Having traversed the Via Dolorosa with the Lord and with Simon, the crowd now arrives at Golgotha, the place of the crucifixion. Golgotha is the converging point of all ancient history and the origin of all modern history. We said in one of our lectures, if I follow my wife's admonition I probably have said it more than once that the Old Testament saints looked forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus and the church looks back to the coming of our Lord Jesus. And it is true that this that happened on Golgotha is the converging point of all history. And I think it is particularly the converging point of the western world.

The time of nineteen hundred years has not been able to blot out the memory of our Lord Jesus. Every day in our city, thousands of our citizens are unconsciously bearing witness to the fact that Jesus Christ was in the world. Every calendar that hangs on the wall, every check that we write including those that come back marked NSF, every check that is drawn, every letter that we write and give the date upon it; every addition of the newspaper connects our day with the day of Jesus Christ. This is July the 8th, 1974, 1974 what? Well AD 1974. AD: *Anno Domini*: In the year of the Lord. So every time we say 1974 we are making reference to what happened at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some have tried to explain away our Lord Jesus as a kind of fiction, but such statements have never been taken too seriously. It was a French skeptic who exploded

the view that everything about Jesus Christ was just a myth. With one sentence, he said, "It would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus." And that pretty well explains the sense, or disposition, that a person has when he considers the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. If it were simply a myth, then I think I should like to worship the person who was responsible for this myth.

We're exposed here to intriguing events and intriguing sayings of our Lord. We all know that the last words of men are important. Most of us who have known someone who has died remember the last words. A person speaks in his last words about reality more often than not. Generally speaking, the truth is most likely to come from the person who is about to die. Our Lord Jesus Christ's words, of course, are all significant. There was never any distinction between his words that he spoke on the cross and his words elsewhere, so far as the truthfulness of them is concerned. But still they are important, these last words, because they are his last words. All of his words are spirit, all of his words are life, as he has said, but these take on a special significance.

We are going to look at one of them in our study tonight, even though the title for the next study is the beginning of a couple of messages or so on the last words, because I don't think that we can take these verses up and avoid at least one of them because they cover the time during which our Lord spoke more than one of his words on the cross. But, first of all, a word about the crucifixion in verse 24, "And when they had crucified him." There were three forms of the cross used by the Romans and others for crucifixion. There is the form like a T, which I have put here on our transparency on the left front or bottom of the transparency. This is called the Latin form of the cross. Then sometimes this form of the cross was used. And also the third form, most familiar to us, because Jesus Christ is usually represented as being upon this type of cross. It is, however, the opinion of most scholars that it is most likely of these three that Jesus Christ died on the Latin form of the cross and thus it would be in the shape of a T.

Let's come now to second, the parting of the garments. And in order to get the force of what is being said here, I want you to turn over to John chapter 19, verses 23 and 24 and let me read these verses which are parallel with this text, Mark 15:24. John chapter 19 and verse 23 and 24, we read in the Johannine account of the crucifixion,

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be:" (John adds) "that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, And for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

I think this is a very important happening at our Lord's crucifixion. Generally speaking, Christians, speaking generally, not Christians at Believers Chapel, not Christians at most of our evangelical churches, strongly evangelical churches, most Christians, other than these, pay more attention to the birth of our Lord Jesus than they do to his death. Even among those who think that his death is important, they still pay more attention to his birth. Now, if you do not believe that, notice the difference between the celebration at Christmas and the celebration of Good Friday. There is a great deal of difference. I think that reflects the fact that, generally speaking, Christendom makes a great deal more over the incarnation of our Lord Jesus than his death.

Now, some modern theologians are perfectly happy about that, because they like to stress the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. In fact, they like to ground their stress in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus in the teaching of some of the earliest fathers. Such as, Athanasius, who laid a great deal of stress upon the incarnation of the Lord Jesus and wrote a famous book on this, the *De Incarnatione Verbi*: "concerning the incarnation of the word." They like to think that that tradition is more in line with the apostolic teaching than the tradition in which we lay a great deal of stress upon the death of our Lord.

Now, I would like to disagree with that and I would like to disagree with it very strongly. I do not think that the New Testament lays nearly so much stress upon the birth of our Lord as it does upon his death. And I think all you have to do in order to agree with me on that, or at least see the force of that argument, is to read the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John and notice the proportionate space that is devoted to the events of the last week, as over or against the space devoted to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we usually pay more attention to the birth than to the death. We pay more attention to the manger clothes in which our Lord was found at his birth than we do to the cross nakedness of the Lord Jesus. All of us know that he was laid in a manger in swaddling clothes, but how many of us realize that he died naked?

Now, it's interesting that in the Gospel of Luke when an account is given of how our Lord was found in the manger, it is specifically stated that this would be a sign to the shepherds. Remember, they were told in Luke chapter 2, verse 12, "And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." I would like to suggest, I cannot prove this, I would like to suggest that if it is a sign that the Lord Jesus lay in a manger in swaddling clothes, and I think it was not only an identifying sign for the shepherds, but it was very appropriate that he was born as he was and that those facts have significance in explaining him. If that was a sign, then I would like to suggest that the fact that our Lord Jesus died naked is also a providential sign to us. In fact, I think the disrobing of Christ was a special symbol and it spoke a unique language of God. I'm going to give you a new text of Scripture. It's not found in the Bible, but I am going to add it. "This shall be the sign unto us. We shall find the Surety robbed of his clothes and hanging on the cross." That's what we should look for when we think of the Redeemer, the Surety, the one who stands as surety for our redemption.

Now, I am going to explain what I mean by that because I think the disrobing is a special redemptive sign. Now, I mind you when I say "a special redemptive sign," I do

not mean to suggest that we should lay the same stress on what I am going to tell you that we do on the more obvious teaching of the Bible. I am just going to submit this to your attention, and then you can go home tonight and think about it and see if you do not think that there is some significance in what I am going to try to set forth. I want you to notice the statement that is made after the one in which Mark says, "And when they had crucified him." The text reads, "They parted his garments." From John, we know that there four soldiers there, because they parted his garments and each one took a fourth part. So the four soldiers were there.

As far as I can tell from the Greek text, it is probably true, this is not provable I don't think, it's probably true that both inner and outer garments were referred to so that our Lord did die, not only naked, but stark naked. Now, I stress this because there are a few occasions in the Bible where we read the word, "naked," such as, we read that Peter was naked when he was fishing in John chapter 21. But it's evident he most likely had about him an inner garment that they ordinarily wore when they were fishing. It is also true that the Jews did not like to see someone hung completely naked, and so they gave them a kind of loincloth to cover their nakedness slightly. But this crucifixion was under the direction of the Romans and there was no reason to suspect that the Jewish compassion, if that could be called compassion, prevailed at this time. So let's just assume that he was completely naked. At any rate, he was naked in the truest sense of the word.

Now, I'm going to ask you, if you will, to turn back with me to the first book of the Bible. In case you have forgotten, that's Genesis. Genesis chapter 2, and well we haven't referred to Genesis in a long time, have we? We've been spending studies for a long time in the Gospel of Mark. Now, Genesis chapter 2, and let me read beginning at verse 23 in the famous passage in which, according to the Scofield edition, God institutes marriage,

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (That must have some application to women's lib, but I don't know exactly what it would be at this point.) "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Now, notice they were both naked and they were not ashamed. What is the meaning of that? Well, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, nakedness is a picture of the shame of lost innocence due to sin. That is specifically stated in several passages in the Old Testament. God speaks of the fact that he will uncover the garments of Israel. Why will he do that? Well, he will expose them to shame because of their sin. In other words, they will come under the judgment of God because of their sin. Now, Adam and Eve here in the Garden of Eden were naked and they were not ashamed. Why? Well, because they had not sinned. They had not come under the judgment of God. They were naked, but they were not ashamed. God had not brought to them the conviction of their sin and their sense of exposure to judgment as a result of what is going to happen in the Garden of Eden.

And as he did in the Garden of Eden because, as you well know, the first thing that happened after Adam and Eve sinned was that they discovered that they were naked and Adam ran to hide from God, and to make for himself fig leaves in order to cover his nakedness. He had sensed that he had sinned, evidently, some indication of his sin was now found in his physical being. Perhaps, there was a kind of Shekinah Glory about man and his wife in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps, when that was gone attention was directed to the fact that they had sinned; we do not know. At any rate, there was something about their physical condition that convinced Adam that he needed some covering, and so he ran for the fig leaves. I would only imagine, in light of the fact that fig leaves are not very comfortable, that this must have been the nearest tree. And as soon as the sin came he looked for the nearest tree, and that was the nearest tree and he

made the fig leaves in order to cover his nakedness, the shame of lost innocence and exposure to judgment.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes to this when in speaking of the word of God in the 4th chapter. Remember, he says,

"For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

In other words, the word of God is living and powerful, and it is going to judge us and all things are naked before the word of God. We are exposed to the judgment of the word of God.

Well now, I think then, that when we read that the Lord Jesus died naked, we are to understand that our Lord is dying under the judgment for sin. This is just another way whereby God tells us that the Lord Jesus dies for sin; he dies naked. The shame of sin is also our Lord's immeasurable. He not only dies for the penalty of sin, but all of the effects of sin are part of his suffering. And so he must suffer even the shame and reproach of sin, and he must hang naked on the cross as a visible sign of the fact that he is under the judgment of God. I do not think, therefore, that it was an accident that the Lord Jesus died naked. It was a sign to a spiritual mind.

The details of the crucifixion, itself, I didn't say much about because, in one of our preceding studies, I commented on the cruelty and the vulgarity of the crucifixion. Seneca, a pagan writer, speaks of the awful cruelties that were wanted to fall from the lips of men who were being crucified. And Cicero tells us that the tongues of victims who were to be crucified were often cut out in order that the executioners wouldn't have

to listen to the curses that men, who were being crucified, inflicted upon those who were responsible for their death. It was also the habit, usually, for them to take the two feet of the one who was crucified and hanging upon this cross, and to put them together parallel and then to drive a nail through the heels of both of the legs and they would be impaled by their heels. Their knees would be bent up. Generally speaking, these crosses were only about the size of a man's height. So the men's knees were bent. One knee, the right knee usually, was placed over the left knee and they were crucified in that fashion. In our Lord's case, it seems clear that he was crucified on a longer cross, because it was necessary for those who gave him drink to put it on a reed in order to reach to give it to him. And furthermore, it seems also evident that others could see him from a distance. So, probably, his death was slightly different in that respect.

The soldiers, although legally able to claim the minor possessions of an executed man, were oblivious to the fact that when they divided the clothes of our Lord Jesus, they were fulfilling Scripture. Will you turn with me to Psalm 22, and verse 18. This is the great Messianic psalm of our Lord's crucifixion, probably a typical psalm, but it may also be a direct predictive prophecy. At any rate, our Lord Jesus cites this as he hangs upon the cross, and we read in verse 18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." John the Apostle refers to this specific text and says, "It is fulfilled there."

Well now, I'm thinking what I've been saying, I have been trying to say that our Lord died naked because he died under the judgment of God, and we are to look at that as a special redemptive sign. But now, turning back to the Markan passage, we notice in the next clause something else, "They parted his garments, casting lots for them, what every man should take." Now, over in the Johannine account it is said that there were four soldiers there and each one took a part of our Lord's garments. But in the case of the cloak which was woven from without a seam, they cast lots for that.

Now, what is the point for this, each one taking a part of the covering of our Lord's garment? Well, now we go back to Genesis chapter 3 in our thoughts, and we remember that Adam and Eve were naked and without shame. Then their shame came home to them after they had sinned. And in the remainder of Genesis chapter 3, we read of the details that follow. God came down in the garden, of course, and he executed judgment upon the serpent, he executed judgment upon the man, he executed judgment upon the woman. He also gave them a promise of the redeemer to come. He said that the seed of the woman is going to crush the head of the serpent. He gave them, in this first preaching of the gospel, some hope though they were now exposed to judgment. And we read, "Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." Evidently, he believed the word of God to the extent that he saw that, through Eve, there was going to come someone who would be victorious in the struggle with Satan, or the serpent. And then we read, "Because she was the mother of all living. For Adam also and for his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." In other words, they took off the fig leaves constructed out of the labor of man and, for them, substituted garments that were, in a sense, provided by God, because he evidently slew the animal, took the skin from the animal, and clothed Adam and Eve in a garment that was of God's providing.

Now, all of this, of course, is designed to be illustrative of spiritual truth. It is designed to show us that our works can never provide a clothing that is acceptable with God, can never provide us with what Isaiah calls "a robe of righteousness" that is acceptable with God, but only God can do that. And he does that through the suffering of our Lord, because on the basis of the satisfaction which he rendered to the holiness of God, God is now free. Since this has been secured by the shedding of the blood, he is free to clothe, in a robe of righteousness, all who acknowledge their sin and flee to the refuge, who is our Lord Jesus himself. Then God clothed them with a righteousness that is acceptable to him.

Now that, I think, is what is meant, ultimately, when we read that those soldiers took our Lord's garments which had covered him. They took each one apart to cover themselves, casting lot for the garment that was woven without seam. In other words, in the pictures about the cross of the Lord Jesus we have large audiovisual of what was happening when our Lord died. He died under judgment, but also, by virtue of his righteousness and holiness, man is able to obtain a robe of righteousness that is acceptable with God. Klaas Schilder, the famous Dutch theologian, has said, "God could put clothing upon the first Adam, the coats of skins, only because he would, one day, take it off the second Adam." I agree with that; I think he's right.

Now, then, we come to the prayer for postponement. We turn back to Mark chapter 15. Now, in Mark, he does not say anything about this prayer. So we notice that verse 25, "It was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription over his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Now, of course, Mark does not give us the details that Luke does. So I want you to turn over to Luke also, to Luke chapter 23, and we are going to take up one of the sayings of our Lord, the first one that he uttered. Next week, we'll continue this with others of the sayings. Luke chapter 23, then verse 33 and 34,

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." (Our Lord was going to have a word for one of these later on.) "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Evidently, a reference not to the malefactors who we just mentioned because they were not doing anything at this point, he's talking about the crowd, in general.) "And they parted his raiment and cast lots."

Luke chapter 23, verse 34, "Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." It is at this point in the Markan account that we must substitute this Lukan account, because it is then that our Lord offered this prayer for postponement.

Now, I want to point out, first of all, the relationship of this saying to the context. What a vivid contrast there is between the statement which our Lord makes, a statement of large compassion, as over or against the Roman and Jewish cruelty of the crucifixion. Josephus had said, remember, that this was the most retched of all ways to die. And in the midst of our Lord's death, he offers this wonderful, beautiful prayer of postponement: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now, let's look at the request itself. You're noticing that I am calling this a prayer for postponement. Now, the most obvious way to designate this would be the prayer for forgiveness. Now, that would be the most obvious thing to say but that would be wrong, because this is not a prayer for forgiveness and I want to try to show you why it is not a prayer for forgiveness. The word that is used here is the Greek word, *aphiemi*. Now, since we have such great scholars in this audience, I think it's appropriate that we should put down a Greek word. I don't often do this, you know. I have a friend who does it quite frequently. That is the Greek word.

Now, I think, perhaps we had better transliterate it, because there may be one or two here who are not able to pronounce that too well. *Aphiemi, aphiemi*. Let's just transliterate it this way. And that's a long e. *Aphiemi*. Now, this word is a most interesting word. Can I get you to stand up and make that face in front of all of them? She was having a little fun; she wasn't making it at me. Now, this word is important for understanding this text, because *aphiemi* has a number of different meanings in the New Testament. It's a very common word. It means, literally, to sin away. "*Apa*" means away; "*iemti*" means to sin. So *aphiemi* means, literally, to sin away, release. Now, it's natural that there should be some cases where this word is used for forgive, because that idea of sending away the guilt of sin is, of course, very close to the idea of just sending away.

But that is not the meaning that the word has all the time. Very frequently it means, simply, to release.

Now, let's look at a few places so that you can see it. Luke chapter 8, in verse 51, it also means to permit, to allow, to send away, to forgive, to let go, to release, a number of things. Now we read in verse 51, "And when he came into the house, he allowed" he permitted, "no man to go in, except Peter, and James, and John." Now, the only thing I want you to notice here is that it's very clear that this doesn't mean, to forgive.

Now then, let's look at chapter 13 and verse 8, "And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also." Well let me go back and read the two preceding verses,

"He spoke also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came sought fruit on it, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year."

There it is translated, let alone. Let it alone this year, don't bother it this year, don't execute judgment upon it this year. Notice that particularly.

Now then, let's look at another place. Let's turn to John chapter 18, verse 8. I gave you those from Luke because, after all, someone may come up who is a good scholar in the audience and say, "Dr. Johnson, you only gave us meanings of words outside the Gospel of Luke. Maybe Luke never used it in that sense." So I gave it to you from Luke because I wanted to show you that this is the way Luke uses the word. Now, in John chapter 18, in verse 8 we read, "Then ask he them, Whom seek ye? They said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: therefore if ye seek me, let these go their way." Here it's translated let go. Let go. So now you can see we've had the word meaning to let alone, let go. So it's not evident at all that this word means,

forgive. It does mean often forgive, but there are many times, as you can see, when it doesn't mean, to forgive.

Now, then, if it does not mean forgive here, what does it mean when Jesus says, "Father, let them go; for they know not what they do?" Why it should be obvious to us that what our Lord is praying, then, is that they might be released from immediate judgment. In other words, he is not praying for the cancellation of their guilt; they are guilty because of what they are doing. He's not praying for the cancellation of their sins or the guilt of their sins, but he's praying for a postponement of judgment upon them. "Let them go;" release them, "for they know not what they do."

Now, then, the logic of the situation demands this kind of meaning. Let's just suppose, for the sake of argument, that you're a kind of person who says, "Well I don't care what you say," the Greek says, "I follow the King James Version. What was good enough for Paul is good enough for me." [Laughter] There have been people who have argued that way. Now, I am going to ask you a question. You want to contend for forgive; you want to think this means forgive. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." After all, all your life, that's the way you've read it, that's the way you've thought about it, all your life. You'd hate for someone to take something so familiar and take it away from you and tell you something else. So you say it means forgive. OK.

Now, I'm going to ask you a question. Is ignorance of the law an excuse? I'll start out with our law. Is ignorance of our law an excuse? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Why if that were true, then we shouldn't ever take the gospel to any heathen. If they don't know what they are doing, according to this reasoning, then you should never take the gospel to them. But even in our common law, ignorance is no excuse. How could our Lord Jesus be saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?" In the law of God, we are guilty of our sin, whether we know about it or not.

And, in fact, the more we sin, the more hardened we become toward sin, the less we realize how sinful we are. By that kind of reasoning, what you should do is sin and sin and sin and sin until sin means nothing to you and you don't even know the depths of your sin. Then, of course, you may receive forgiveness. But the text says, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Well now, I do not believe that ignorance is an excuse, but I do believe that it is possible for ignorance of our sin to gain for us a reprieve from the execution of immediate judgment, for a time. I think that is justification for delay in the execution of judgment. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." No, that could not make sense; it would not make sense, but "Father, release them; for they know not what they do." Release them for a time as we shall see. Ah, that begins to make a little sense.

There are two kinds of forgiveness if you wanted to insist on this. There are two kinds of forgiveness. One is a forever kind of forgiveness, and the other is a temporary suspension of judgment. It's only in that later sense that this text can be understood. Ignorance, I say, is no excuse for forgiveness, but it is a basis for suspension of immediate judgment. And you'll remember that in Acts chapter 3, in verse 17, as well as in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, the apostles allude to the fact that Israel, though under judgment, did what they did in ignorance.

Now, then, is there any kind of parallel to this in Israel? Well, there is the city of refuge. There were about six of these cities of refuge and when an Israelite slew a man inadvertently, he could flee to the city of refuge. And if he could get there in time, before the executer of judgment upon him, the member of the family of the one whom he had slain, if he got into the city in time, he was safe until the death of the high priest. In other words, there were occasions upon which a man was released from the judgment of the law.

Now, I'm going to ask you to turn with me over to a passage that is often debated. It's 2 Peter chapter 3, and verse 9, but it helps so much to explain what happened when

Jesus prayed for a postponement. 2 Peter chapter 3. Now, remember, in 2 Peter chapter 3, we have Peter's prophecy of what's going to happen in the last days. He says in the last days, according to 2 Peter 3:3, page 1340, he says,

"That scoffers are going to come and they are going to walk after their own lusts, and they are going to be shouting around the slogan, Where's the promise of his coming? Where is the promise of his coming?" (I wouldn't be surprised but what this is the new bumper sticker of the tribulation period.) "Where is the promise of his coming?" (Now, this is what they are going to be saying. And they are going to have some reasons for it too.) "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of." (Now, Peter is going to answer them and I want you to notice how he does it. These scoffers are going to say, "Where is the promise of his coming? Everything has been the same ever since the fathers in ancient times." Now, Peter says, "You have forgotten a couple of significant facts. The first is, you've forgotten the flood.") For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: By which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." (In other words, God has intervened since the days of the fathers. They've forgotten their Scriptures, but, furthermore, the Bible also prophesized about an intervention in the future. He says,) "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (So, he says, "You've forgotten the flood in the past and you have forgotten that Scripture prophesized of a fire that is to come when you say all things continue as they have been since the foundation of the world or since the fathers. "But further," Peter says, because I'm sure that they would then ask the question, "Well why the nineteen hundred years' delay since Jesus reaffirmed that he was coming again. Now, Peter tells us why we have had this delay. He tells us why God has been silent for nineteen hundred years. He

says,) "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

In other words, time is inconsequential with God. He sits in eternity and he looks at an ever-present now. To him, there is no difference except in that he, too, understands the process of time as we see it, but he sees Adam standing in the Garden of Eden and he sees the second coming of Jesus Christ, because he is eternal. "One day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day." If that is true, then if he made the promise two thousand years ago, it's just as if he made it the day before yesterday with God. So when you think because he's waited two thousand years, you must not think of two thousand years according to our reckoning of time, you must think of two thousand years according to God's reckoning of time. It was just the day before yesterday that he made that promise of the second coming.

And he adds, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, he does not delay." We often say, "If the Lord tarryes." Well, the Lord's not tarrying. He's not waiting in heaven because he hadn't finished the sport page yet before he is going to come in his second coming. He's no lazy Dagwood who just manages to catch the bus at the last minute. Why everything in heaven proceeds according to the leisure of eternity. It's not yet his time; it's not yet his purposed time. Why? Well, there are still some things happening down here that are important. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us."

Now, I'm not going to enter into a technical discussion of this passage. There is no question whatsoever, but that the long suffering of God pertains to the salvation of believers. He is longsuffering toward us. Why the two thousand years since the promise of the second coming? Because, in the two thousand year interval, he has been engaged in the program of bringing believers to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I softened that, because I didn't want to upset you. Let me go back and say it again. In the

two thousand year period of time since the promise of his second coming, the Lord Jesus has been gathering together his, what?

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] Elect, right, thank you, you said it for me. "That's why we've had this delay," Peter will say. That's why he is delaying. He is gathering his elect. He is longsuffering to us not willing that any of, whom?

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] Of the elect. Now, you've been in Spain all this time, where did you learn that good theology?

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] [Laughter] "Not willing that any of the elect should perish." This doesn't have anything to do with the unsaved. The context is plain and clear. "Not willing that any of the elect should perish, but," now I'm coming to the climactic point, "But," in the Greek text I will put the word on again, it's the verb *koraesa* an infinitive of *koreteo*, and it really means to have room for, "but that all," all whom? "All of us." Not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should have time, should have room, should have opportunity for repentance. Why has Jesus Christ been delaying? Why God is engaged in fulfilling his program, that's why. Now, when the last believer in the Lord's sheep believes, then the promises will quickly go into operation and the program of the salvation involved here will be over. That's why. Now, that's why two

thousand years have been in operation since our Lord made promises. In a moment, we read verse 15,

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Now, what, then, is the application of this to our Lord's statement on the cross? Why, it should be obvious to you now. The Lord Jesus prayed on the cross, "Father, release them, let them go; for they know not what they do." That prayer was made in the middle of the day, but it was really in the morning of the Day of Grace. And I want to say to you, my Christian friends, that which we call the Day of Grace, the Day of Salvation, from the Day of Pentecost down to the present time is the result of the prayer of our Lord Jesus when he said, "Father, let them go; for they know not what they do." May there be a time in which the elect may be gathered from the four corners of the earth so, that there shall be one flock and one shepherd as our Lord has promised. So he is struggling for the continuation of general history that the incipient triumphs of special history, revelation history, salvation history, begun in the Old Testament might flourish in the full energy of the new covenant.

In other words, our Lord is praying for every one of the saints from that time down to the present time. So he's praying for a certain Paul, he's praying for an Augustine, he's praying for a Luther, he's praying for a Calvin, he's praying for an S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., and he's praying for you if you belong to the elect when he says, "Father, release them; for they know not what they do." They are under judgment, they are sinful, they are guilty, but give them room for repentance. That's what that prayer means. I

think that's great, so that I am the answer of the prayer of the Lord Jesus. And evidently, there are some others, still, who have not come, because he hasn't come. That program is still, so far as the advent is concerned, is still in abeyance because the other program has not yet finished.

Now then, time is just about up. I only make a statement regarding the superscription. I really didn't have much to say about points five, six, and seven anyway. But verse 26 of our Mark 15 passage reads, "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." This is more an announcement of a fact, than an allegation of fiction. Pilate thought it was a fiction. He said, "Let's write over the cross, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'" The reason Pilate did that, of course, was because he wanted to embarrass the Jews. The Jews had caused him a lot of trouble. So he said, "Let's just take this Jesus of Nazareth and let's call him the King of the Jews. That'll make the Jews mad." That's what he was trying to do. So he put up above it, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." They came and objected. They said, "No, no, say he said he was the King of the Jews." Pilate said, "What I have written, I have written."

And so I look at that and I must confess that I see here that God speaks through Pilate. Yes, he speaks through Pilate, but he also speaks above Pilate. In fact, I think if God were to say something to Pilate, he would say, "Really Pilate, what you have written, you have not written. It was I who forced you, even though you did not understand it, to put above that cross, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,' because that's what he is. And I put it there in Hebrew, and Latin, and in Greek in order that everybody may see that he is what he claimed to be." And that's what he is. And so God's providence overrules the wicked Roman prater.

Oh, the tremendous control of events that God has. And, further, he not only controls events, he controls the thoughts of men. And I'm glad that he is for me; for if God be for me, who can be against me? Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this beautiful illustration of the divine providence which guards and guides every step of our way. We thank Thee that our Lord Jesus, out of the agony of the cross, prayed for the suspension of the immediate judgment of God for a time that we might enter the body of Christ. We give Thee thanks and praise. For Christ's sake. Amen.