



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior, John 19:28-30

"The Last Words - IV: The Finished Work of Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight is the last of the series of studies in the Suffering Servant, the Old Testament and the Doctrine of the Atonement in which we consider specific texts of the Bible, and so with tonight we are concluding that particular aspect of our series. And we will begin next Wednesday night with the study of the question, "For Whom Did Christ Die?" And then on that Wednesday night we will be dealing with the historical background of the controversy between the Arminians and the Calvinists over the question, how these questions arose, historically.

And then in the following Wednesday nights, at least two, perhaps three, we will deal with the scriptural side of the question, "For Whom Did Christ Die?" and then that may conclude our series, we do have one or two more that are listed on the schedule but in the light of what we have done, I'm not sure that we will continue them. But at least the next few Wednesday nights we will be dealing with the question of the design of the atonement or "For Whom Did Christ Die?"

I think the tape room is all set, so let's begin our class with a word of prayer,

[Prayer] Our Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the night before us. We thank Thee for the word of God. We particularly thank Thee for the ministry that our

Lord Jesus had in the last days of his life upon the earth in the flesh. And we pray that as we study these final sayings of his that he uttered from the cross, that the significance of them may become plain to us, not only in the doctrinal sense, and not only in the theoretical sense, but may they also come home to us in a practical way, and may the result be that our devotion to him who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own blood may be deepened. And we pray too Lord that if there should be someone here who does not know Jesus Christ that this might be the night in which they come to know him. We commit the hour to Thee. In his name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is the finished work of Christ and so we're turning to John chapter 19 again, and we're going to read three verses there, and then three verses in Luke chapter 23. Both of these passages together give us the last words of our Lord upon the earth in the days of his flesh. John chapter 19 and verse 28 through verse 30,

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (or the spirit)."

Now will you turn over to Luke chapter 23, but we will be dealing with that John passage first. While I read verses 44 through 46 of chapter 23, Luke chapter 23 verse 44 through 46,

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in the

midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the spirit."

Our Lord must have experienced supreme spiritual joy when he finished his work. It is certainly true to human experience that the greater the labor that we expend the greater the joy there is in the accomplishment of that labor. What a joy it must have been to Dante, for example, when after all of the preparation involved and all of the labor involved in producing something like the *Divine Comedy* having finished it he was able to put down his pen and write underneath it, "Finis." The same must have been the experience of Milton when he finished one of his great works, such as *Paradise Lost*. It must have been a tremendous sense of accomplishment to have done something that one knows is a work that is worthwhile.

What a tremendous sense of joy it must have been to Columbus when, after all of the labor that he had spent in gathering the patronage necessary to make the trip, when after he had endured the storms of the Atlantic, the uncertainties of what lay before him, the mutiny of his own sailors on the boat, finally he sighted the peak of Darien, it must have been a tremendous sense of accomplishment and a tremendous sense of joy. It is finished. The thing that I have dreamed of all of these months and years is now a reality. Well I think when the Lord Jesus reached the stage in his ministry when he cried out on the cross, "It is finished," there must have been a tremendous sense of accomplishment and resultant spiritual joy as a result of arriving at the place of completion of all of the plans and purposes of the God head, which have stretched back into eternity and on into this very moment, and now, it is done.

Now this sixth word that our Lord uttered, "It is finished," is a triumphant cry, and it is a cry which expresses a supreme sense of spiritual accomplishment. But more than this, it is a cry with great dogmatic significance. Now I'm using dogmatic in the sense of theological, of course, because that is the proper sense of the word dogma. It is

something that the church teaches, dogma. It's come to have a bad connotation because the world doesn't like the things that the true church teaches, and so, their teachings are called dogmas and now dogma has a bad connotation because the world doesn't like our dogmas.

And even some of our Christian friends don't like our dogmas either because they like to think of the book that we study as a book that is really a kind of recounting of Christian devotional experience. And they do not like the idea of these dogmas. You get this often when you hear a man say, "Now I'm not so much interested in the doctrine of this as I am in the practical outworking of it in your life, or I'm not interested in theology, I'm interested in practice," as if theology is bad. Professor Warfield, who was probably our greatest theologian of the twentieth century, in arguing the significance of dogma and the importance of it, in an outstanding little work on the idea of systematic theology, has said in that work that when you come right down to it the Bible itself is not a description primarily of Christian life, it's really a book of dogmas from beginning to end, a book of dogmas.

Now this word, "It is finished," is a triumphant cry. It expresses the epitome of Christian experience of our Lord's in a sense that it was the highlight of his carrying out the will of God, no doubt. But it is also a cry with tremendous dogmatic significance. Now Jesus Christ did not say, "I am finished." He said, "It is finished." This is not the last gasp of a worn out life, but this is a triumphant utterance, and we are to look at it in order to gain its doctrinal significance. It is the sixth of the words that Jesus uttered. It has its Old Testament roots. It goes right back to Genesis chapter 1 verse 31 and Genesis chapter 2, verse 1, Psalm 22 and about verse 30. Just as well as this seventh saying will have its roots in the Old Testament too.

Now let's look at this sixth saying. We looked at the fifth last week. That was Roman one in the outline. This is the sixth saying. I gave you a special outline for what we did last week, but it is part of the overall outline. And we now want to look at the

sixth saying, and I want to remind you first of the circumstances of the saying. Now those of you who were here Monday, a week ago, when we studied, "I thirst," will remember that I tried to make the point that when the Lord Jesus uttered, "I thirst," that the eternal death which our Lord died was past. He had cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me," in the fourth and central utterance of the seven utterances of the cross. It was at that moment that he experienced, to the uttermost, the separation from God that is the penalty for human sin. So at the time that our Lord cries, "It is finished," the eternal death is passed.

The one thing that remains is that he experience the results of spiritual death, and the results of spiritual death are, of course, physical death. I guess I should say the result is physical death. So that remains. This statement is uttered somewhat proleptically. "It is finished." And then he is to give up his life because physical death is the issue of spiritual death. And he takes the vinegar in order to strengthen himself for all that he is experiencing. In order that to the end he may have his senses fully in his control, just as he did not take the wine mingled with myrrh, which would have deadened his senses and deadened the pain in order that he might bare the pain to the full, now he takes the refreshing vinegar, the refreshing workman's wine in order to keep his senses clear for the full experience of the suffering of the cross.

Well having said that, let's look now at the content of the saying. You remember that in our last study, I said that the statement, "I thirst," was one word in the Greek text. It is simply the word *dipsao*. This too is simply one word in the Greek text. You probably have seen it transliterated on tracts because there are several tracts written I think the title, *Tetelesti*, that means, "It is finished." It is one word. Now we have something of an exegetical problem in the statement because he does not tell us, precisely, what he means when he says, "It is finished." What is the "it?" To what does the "it" refer? Some students have suggested that when Jesus says, "It is finished," he has reference to the Scriptures.

Now you'll notice in the context immediately proceeding in verse 28 we read, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." And verse 30, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished," and so some students have thought that in the light of the context, perhaps he means, "It is finished," it, that is, the prophecies that have pertained to my dying or my ministry have been fulfilled. Of course, not all of them are fulfilled at this point. We read for example in the immediately following context, verse 36, "For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." So the prophecies as a whole were not completely fulfilled at this time.

Still others have suggested in the light of the difficulty with that interpretation that what he means by, "It is finished," is simply the whole of the passion described say from verse 16 through verse 30. Perhaps that is the meaning, "It is finished," the suffering on the cross. Perhaps most of the Bible students have taken a third interpretation and have suggested that what our Lord means when he says, "It is finished," is what he means in John chapter 17 and verse 4 when he says, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." And there the reference of the statement is to the total program in which our Lord was engaged. All he was to do, as he came from the Father, ultimately went to the cross and finally was to go back to the Father.

So commentators have said the absence of a definite subject forces the reader to call up each work which was now brought to an end. Perhaps that is the meaning. You cannot be certain about it, but he does say in John chapter 17 verse 4 in a statement that is certainly related to this one in his great high priestly prayer, "have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." There remains now the resurrection, but this was not the work of the Son. This was the work of the Father who raised the Son. And so consequently, it may be that our Lord means this, at least we

know that he includes within the statement or the experience of the death under the judgment of God.

There is one other thing that I want you to notice. I feel that in the study of Scripture we should pay attention to every word. Now when the Lord Jesus was speaking to the Father, he spoke to the Father in John 17, and he said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." That is perfectly proper for the Son to speak to the Father and use the term, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." But as he hangs upon the cross, he does not say I have finished the work. He says, "It is finished." And perhaps the reason that he says, "It is finished," here is that he is still acting out his relationship as the servant of Jehovah, and so he doesn't draw attention to himself. He simply says, "It," that is, the work, is finished. "It is finished," not, I have finished the work. He keeps himself in the background, so to speak. He makes the utterance general in order to stress the Father rather than his own part in it. Perhaps also he makes it general in order that everyone may claim a part of it.

Now we come to the significance of the word finished. What does it mean to say, "It is finished?" You know in reading the Bible, you have noticed this, I'm sure, that the divine self satisfaction appears only twice in the Bible. It appears in connection with the creation. When the creation is finished, remember in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 31, the text of Scripture said, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The next chapter begins with something about having finished the work of the creation. And so there is the divine self satisfaction in the accomplishment of the creation. Now here, there is that statement of completion from a member of the God head, the second person, the Lord Jesus. This time, however, it is the divine self satisfaction that appears in connection with the foundation of the new creation. For it is on the basis of this finished work of our Lord Jesus that we have another creation, this one a spiritual creation. So in a sense, what takes place on the cross in the Gospel of

John corresponds to what takes place in the original creation in the Book of Genesis chapter 1.

I feel that this is really John's purpose. I feel that that is really why he is the only one of these writers to include this particular text in his Gospel account because right in the beginning of this book, and throughout the book, there is an implied comparison and contrast between the Book of Genesis and the things that have to do with the ministry of the Lord Jesus. You can see it in the opening phrases of the Gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word." "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

It's almost as if John says now against the background of the first creation, "I want to tell you the story of how we may have a new creation through the Lord Jesus." Both of these creations are through the Son. In fact, I think we could rephrase John chapter 1 and verse 3 and make perfectly good dogmatic sense. It says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." We could substitute the word regenerated and have good doctrinal significance. All things have been regenerated through him, and without him has not anything been regenerated that has been regenerated. So just as the Word is the agency of the first creation, he is the agency though the spirit of the new creation.

I want to say a word about the word finished though. In the Greek, this is the word *teleo*, t-e-l-e-o, *teleo*. It is translated in three different ways in the New Testament, among others. I think it would be good for us to look them up. The first way in which it is translated is as, "to pay," like paying your bills. Matthew chapter 17 and verse 24, "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?" We would be in harmony with the text of John 19 and verse 30 if we translated this. It has been paid. It has been finished, paid.

Now turn to Luke chapter 12 and verse 50, here is another text in which we find this verb, *teleo*. And our Lord says, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with," he is speaking, of course, of his death, "And how am I constrained till it be accomplished!" Accomplished, we could translate John chapter 19 and verse 30, it is accomplished. And then we have another rendering of the word in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 1. And here it is rendered, "to make an end." "And it came to pass," Matthew 11:1, "when Jesus had ceased commanding his twelve disciples," now I said Matthew 11:1, but I don't see it in our text. "And it came to pass when Jesus had ceased," I'm reading the Scofield edition, and they may have changed this, or I may have made a mistake in my notes, but I don't think I made a mistake in my notes. I didn't. The word that has been changed in the Scofield edition of the Authorized Version and translated now, "ceased," was rendered something like, "And it came to pass when Jesus," isn't it, someone have the Authorized Version? "Had made an end?" right, "Had made an end, commanding his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities." And it's translated, "cease" in this edition here. Now this is another fairly accurate rendering of this and we could say that our Lord said when he hung upon the cross, "An end has been made."

Now these three words are very interesting, I think, and this is why I've selected them. The word pay suggests the Doctrine of Redemption. So our Lord when he said, "It is finished," well he had paid the price for redemption. The word accomplish suggests a sacrifice, and when he says, "It is finished," he means as the Great High Priest, he has offered the once and for all sacrifice for the sheep. And the word "to make an end," suggests the total Doctrine of Salvation. And so when he says, "An end has been made," he means simply that he has accomplished the work of salvation. "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." They lose them all because an end has been made, an accomplishment has been made of the sacrifice. The debt has been paid.

Now our Lord's death is that which pays the price for sin and sinners. Now I think it is very important, and we shall see this when we discuss the question of, "For Whom Did Christ Die?" to remember that when the Lord Jesus said, "It is paid," he means precisely that. "It is paid," and salvation is accomplished, accomplished, not simply made possible, but accomplished. Now we must remember that. "It is paid." The price of the redemption, for certain people, is paid.

Now I think we need to say something about the point of this tense too. He says, "It is finished." He uses what we call in Greek the perfect tense. Some of you are students of Greek, like Mrs. Prier, and I think her husband knows a little Greek too. And I'm not speaking about that one that lives around the corner either. But those of you that know a little Greek will know the significance of the perfect tense. The perfect tense in Greek is a tense that indicates an action that took place in past time the results of which action are considered by the author to have continued up to the time of the reference made in the text. So it refers to an action that is done in past time, the results of which continue. The English perfect tense is not precisely the same as the Greek, but this idea is found in this Greek tense, "It is finished." What our Lord means is that the price has been paid, and the results of the payment of the price have continued to the present moment.

Now, of course, other texts of Scripture tell us that they continue on down through the ages of eternity. The perfect tense doesn't tell us that, other facts tell us that. The perfect tense merely says that it has been paid. And we are living now in the results of the payment. And of course, what he refers to by, "It is finished," or "It has been finished," is what he has just said a few minutes before, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" And the experience to which he had been put in those immediately preceding moments, remember he was hanging upon the cross and then at twelve noon there came darkness over the face of the earth, and for three hours our Lord hung in the darkness. It was during that period of time that he experienced spiritual death, and when he cries, "It is finished," he means that is over, it has been paid. We now have the results

of that death available. That's what he means. "It is finished." That means, of course, that it is not necessary for any repetition of the work of Jesus Christ because the debt has been paid. We talk about the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and what we mean by that is that our Lord has paid the whole price for human salvation.

This, of course, runs contrary to many types of doctrine that are common in the professing Christian church, for example, this doctrine of the finished work of the Lord Jesus is directly opposed to the doctrine taught by some segments of the professing Christian church that a man can be saved and then lose his salvation. The whole idea that a man can have everlasting salvation but then can lose it through some act of his is utterly opposed to the idea of a finished work. For if it is possible for me to believe in Jesus Christ and possess an everlasting life and then lose it by some act that I have preformed after I have believed and after I have been regenerated, then when our Lord said, "It is finished," it was not finished. It was only partially done. What remained to be done was my life thereafter.

Now I think it should be obvious to all of us that the idea of the death of our Lord as sufficient and full payment of sin is opposed to the doctrine that one may lose one's salvation. So when he said, "It is finished." It was really finished. And this also, of course is opposed to having a kind of salvation which is procured by anything that we do, such as, for example, a kind of sacramental salvation, a salvation obtained through faith in Jesus Christ plus some sacramental work, the work of baptism, undergoing water baptism, or sitting at the Lord's table, observing the mass, the mass as far as I can tell is a constant Sunday by Sunday denial of the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

Every time a person goes to mass he in effect says, "My sins were not covered by the finished work of the Lord Jesus." He may not realize it, of course, but that is what he is saying theologically. Our Lord said, "It is finished," and so, that means that since we do not gain salvation by anything that we do, we cannot lose our salvation by anything that we do. And it also means that we do not obtain this salvation in the first place by

anything that we do. And even if we think of our salvation as a salvation that comes to us through our act of faith, we have wrongfully understood the New Testament.

And even if we couch our faith in nonmeritorious faith, but nevertheless, it is our act of faith by which we come to faith in Christ. Not acknowledging that that faith comes from God, we are in contradiction with the finished work of the Lord Jesus. For if that faith really is a work of us, and then our Lord did not do it all. We do believe we come to Christ through faith, but it is a faith that is produced in our hearts by the Lord Jesus himself. So let's stop talking about nonmeritorious faith if we mean by that that this is something that we do of ourselves. And then of course if we mean by this something that is done by God then there is no need to talk about nonmeritorious faith because of course it's nonmeritorious if it's done by God. Do you get it?

Hudson Taylor is one of the great missionaries to China and it was through the finished work of the finished work of Jesus Christ that he came to his salvation. He had wrestled with the question of salvation for a long, long time. In fact one of the most interesting biographies is the biography of Hudson Taylor because in it is a recounting of the spiritual struggle through which he went to come to the sense of salvation. I don't remember all of the details, but some of the things that I remember was that he had a godly mother that had prayed for him often. And one day when he was in another place from his mother, she was praying for her son again and it so happened that there came into his hands a gospel tract.

I vaguely remember that he took it out of a waste paper basket, but I may have mixed the story of some other person's salvation with his, but I think that there came into his hand a gospel tract and it had the expression in it, "The finished work of Christ." And he was in a hay loft. How he was there, I don't remember, but he was in a hay loft. It will be interesting to go back and read the true story [laughter] after you've heard my explanation not having read it in about twenty years. But he was in a hay loft, and he was pondering the expression, "The finished work of Christ, the finished work of Christ."

And then it dawned upon him, in the hay loft, and I'm giving his words, that, "since the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid upon the cross, there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees and accept the Savior. If the work truly is finished, then I don't have to do anything. All I need to do is to say, 'Thank you Lord for what you have done!'"

Dr. Chafer, at the seminary, used to preach the gospel that way. I don't know whether you read the conversion of Hudson Taylor, but nevertheless that's the way he used to preach it, that the only response that we have to make to the finished work of the Lord Jesus is simply to say, "Thank you Lord for what you have done." That is faith.

Well now we want to take a look at the seventh saying. This one is in some ways the most interesting of all the sayings because I don't think it is quite as well understood as the others. So let's turn over to the seventh saying in Luke chapter 23, Luke chapter 23 verse 44 through verse 46, the sixth saying, "It is finished," expresses our Lord's satisfaction with regard to the past. The seventh saying, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," expresses his satisfaction with regard to the future. And if we have a pattern of dying manners in the Bible, this is our pattern. "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Now John finished, remember his statement concerning, "It is finished," by saying at the end of that 30th verse, "It is finished and he bowed his head and gave up the spirit." That is the preparation for the physical death, he bowed his head. Now many have made comment concerning this. You notice the Lord Jesus is the subject of that active participle. And having bowed his head, it is our Lord who does it. And isn't it striking that in our Lord's death, his death is so different from ours, and in the very difference of death, you can see his sovereignty. I'm just trying to prepare a message on the sovereignty of God, one message on the sovereignty that is almost a task for angels or apostles, one message on the sovereignty of God.

Well this is one of the evidences of the sovereignty of God. How do men die? Men don't die like this. They give up their life and then their head falls. Have you noticed that? Man has his head up and he's talking, but if he dies, but before his head falls, his spirit goes. That's why his head falls. But did you notice the way our Lord dies? He bows his head then he releases his spirit. He is in total control of everything that is happening there. He is sovereign in his death. Isn't it interesting, just little things like that? I must confess I read that for about five years before I ever noticed what was being said. "He bowed his head and gave up the ghost." I never saw that in that text there was a reference to the sovereignty of God. I know you knew all of that.

Now we want to look at the statement that he made just before he gave up the spirit. He said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Now you remember that in these seven sayings which we've been talking about for about four messages, or five. The first saying is, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The middle one is, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" And we pointed out that in the first relationship that exists between the Son and the Father is a paternal one, a relationship in the family expressed by, "Father, forgive them." But the central utterance when he says, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me," he is trying to stress the fact that there is a judicial relationship now between the Son and the Father because the Son is dying under the judgment of God as the substitute. Now that having finished, since he has finished that judicial work, he again addresses God as the Father in the last saying. "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

A false emphasis is sometimes given concerning this because the impression is given by reading this, I must confess, and by listening to expositions including some of mine in the distant past; the impression is given that this is only a dying utterance of our Lord. I know that this is not only a dying reference of our Lord, and I'm not even sure that it is primarily a dying reference of our Lord. Now one of the interesting things which we have noticed as we have gone through, I'm sure you have, as well as I have, has

been the fact that almost all of these sayings that our Lord uttered are from the Old Testament.

Now he doesn't say, "I'm citing the Old Testament." He had just made the Old Testament so much a part of his life, the Scriptures were so much a part of his life that he was speaking of them because they were part of him. He said, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" And you know, of course, that is the 1st verse of Psalm 22. He says, "It is finished," and that also is related to Psalm 22, verse 30. He has said, "I thirst," that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and we referred that to Psalm 69, which is another Messianic Psalm. So he is thinking and living the experiences referred to by the Old Testament, the prophets, and Moses. The things that they said would be true of the Messiah, he is now experiencing them, and he is so full of the word of God, and it is so much a part of him, that he just utters, I'm sure in impromptu fashion, the parts of Scripture that pertain to his life.

Now this is from Psalm 31, and I want you to turn over to that Psalm for a moment, this statement from Psalm 31; because in this particular statement in Psalm 31, we will have a clue to the significance of the statement that our Lord utters in his last words. Let me read a few verses of the Psalm. Verse 5, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit," that's the passage that he cites. "Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth." Verse 7, "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities; And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: Thou hast set my feet in a large room." He's talking about the blessing that God has brought to his life. Verse 15, "My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from those that persecute me."

Verse 21, "Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shown me his marvelous kindness in a strong city." And finally, verse 23, "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." If you'll read through this Psalm, and read through it a number of times, you will discover that the Psalmist is

writing out of an experience of adversity in the midst of his enemies, but he is thanking God for deliverance. He's not a man who expects to die. He's a man who prays that God will take him through these experiences, and he fully expects to be taken through them. In other words, the man here is not a man who is certain of death, but a man who is certain of preservation from death for life.

Now, this is borne out by the fact that the old Jews, and you will find this in rabbinic literature, for example, in Struck and Billerbeck, which is the outstanding work on the relationship of the Jewish literature to the New Testament, you need not think about going off and getting it, it's about seven volumes, and it is in German, but in Struck and Billerbeck in the second volume of that, there is a reference made to this particular passage in the citation from Psalm 31 and certain statements are made concerning Psalm 31. This Psalm was a prayer that Jewish people prayed, and were recommended to pray, in the evening as they went to bed. It was an evening prayer. In other words, it was the equivalent of, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. God bless mama, daddy, brother, sister, and so on, as many names as you can think of to avoid the final turning out of the light and the goodnight." As you know all of your kids have done if you taught them that particular prayer.

Now I prayed that prayer probably five hundred times, and I never expected to die. I use to say, "If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." But that was a prayer to carry me through the night. Now that is the kind of prayer, and that is the kind of Psalm, that 31 is. It is a petition that a person would be carried through the experiences into the life that is beyond. So what our Lord is praying about is something that is just a milestone in the uninterrupted life which he, the Son of God, lives. He said, "I am he that liveth, and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore." This is the hymn of his continuation, someone has said. "Father we shall go on together." "Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit," not because I'm dying and everything is over, but

because this is simply a milestone in the experience that I, the Son, have with my God.

Now the enemies think that they have ended him, but he negates them by affirming the onward march of his life. This is just one of the times which are in his Father's hands. And so the thing that is prominent is not dying. The thing that is prominent is his activity. The dying is secondary. Someone has said, "In this you have Jesus going out, the human name, but Christ going on." Christ goes out, and God and his work go on. What did our Lord say when he began his ministry? Why the first words that we have our Lord saying were, "I must be about my Father's business." And so, from the first words that our Lord utters to the last, the will of God is primary. This is his way of saying, as he finishes his life, "I must be about my Father's business." "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," for this experience and what lies ahead.

Now, we have a few minutes and perhaps you have a question or two that you would like to ask because I have finished saying what I am going to say. Maybe in the tape room they won't have to apply the machine that makes me sound like someone else on this particular tape. I've had two or three people come to me recently, are you listening Mr. Prier? And have said, "I'm getting those tapes from Believers Chapel, but you don't sound like yourself there. Is that really you?" Anybody have a question? That's all said in fun, you understand Howard? Good.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The question is, "Could our Lord be looking forward to the resurrection in the light of that statement?" Yes, that is exactly what I would say because that's part of what he is going to be doing, and that's really what I meant by saying that this is an evening prayer, and he prays it as an evening prayer. He commits himself to the Father for what lies ahead and the resurrection, of course, is the immediate thing that lies ahead.

I was not going to be disappointed Gerald. I knew that you would have some questions. So fire away, I'm going to make your Dad answer it. Go ahead. I'm always afraid of these questions he asks.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] ...and would not have died unless he voluntarily gave up his life. Well, of course, we would have to say that because our Lord is a divine person. And because of his divine personality, there has to be that element of voluntariness in his death. But he did possess a human nature, and part of the capabilities of human nature is death, and so he was, you know the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews in the 2nd chapter mentions that he was for a time made subject to death, or for the suffering of death, and so part of his humiliation was to take a body in which he could die. So that is a potential thing, but no, death could not have taken him unless there was an acquiescence because of his divine personality.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] It was impossible that he should beholden of death.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well, I don't think it's so much sovereign in responsibility as it is the sovereignty of God and human activity working together. Human responsibility results from this. Yes. In fact, the death of our Lord is traceable to the Father, remember, he said, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." And in Isaiah chapter 53, what was the passage, what does it say there? Someone quickly, about verse 8 or 9, yes, it's verse

10, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him." And so, our Lord's death is traceable to himself. It is traceable to the Father. And it is traceable to wicked men. So they all conspired together. I hate to use that term in reference to the Son and the Father, and that really is probably not the proper term, but they all were involved in it.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Not subject to death, capable of dying.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yeah, that's right. That's why I said capable of dying. In other words, it's part of the capability of human nature to die. The evidence of it, of course, is man has died. The text that I had referenced to is Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 8 and 9, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Yes, sir.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Would you repeat that again because I'm not quite sure I understand what you mean? I know, of course, you said that the death of our Lord was the defeat of Satan.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes, alright.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] No I don't think it has anything to do with Satan and that sense. The reason that our Lord overcame Satan, and the way in which he overcame Satan, was related to what you were saying right at the beginning. Satan's hold upon man is a hold that is related to the sin of man. And so when our Lord offered the sacrifice that makes the payment for sin then those who were held by sin now are able to escape from Satan. So it is by virtue of what our Lord accomplished when he died on the cross that Satan now is no longer able to have authority over those who have believed in the Lord Jesus. And Satan's authority, remember, is a delegated authority to begin with because we do not believe, in Christianity, in a dualism of two eternal principles of Satan, or persons of Satan and God. But Satan is under the sovereignty of God. But he apparently has delegated authority by virtue of man's sin. Man has given himself into the hands of Satan by virtue of his sin.

But when our Lord came and paid the price for sin, we are delivered from our jailer, so to speak. The basis of a legal release has been offered and thus we escape from Satan, and he is defeated in that sense. I don't think it has anything to do with Satan. Satan is an angelic being and does not have a body, and the things that pertain to the human body don't really pertain to him at all. One final question, yes, sir.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Does human nature presuppose the capability of sin?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Our Lord's human nature, yes, our Lord's human nature is human nature just as your human nature and my human nature, the same. And in human nature there is the potential for sin. The evidence for that is clearly, Adam sinned. The potential was there. Now, in our Lord's case however, he was a divine person, and being a divine person, who took to himself the human nature, the human nature that he took to himself now being united with a divine personality partakes of the strength of the divine nature. And thus our Lord was impeccable. He could not sin. But his human nature, taken by itself, was the same as ours.

Now you know now various illustrations of, and they never completely satisfy, but various illustrations have been given by theologians to explain the impeccability of Christ, and one of the most effective, I think, is the illustration that Professor Shedd used. He spoke of a steel beam, and that was to represent the divine personality of our Lord. And it's impossible, he would suppose, it's impossible for anybody to break a steel beam. But then if we also presuppose, by the side of it, a thin piece of iron wire, it's quite easy to break that, and that represents, of course, the human nature of our Lord.

Now if we take the human nature of our Lord, unite the human nature to divine person, it is the same as if we are to take the easily breakable iron wire and wrap it around the steel beam, and then try to break the iron wire. And of course, it cannot be done because the strength of the steel beam is now the strength of the iron wire. And so likewise in our Lord's case, only by analogy, being a divine person he could not sin, but if human nature itself, taken as it was, was exactly like ours, our Lord Jesus was temptable because he possessed a human nature, but he was impeccable. He could not sin. That doesn't mean he did not sin, that's sinlessness, of course, all believe that. But some who

believe he did not sin believe he could have sinned, but I think the Bible doctrine is rather, our Lord was temptable, and not peccable, but impeccable. He could not sin by virtue of the union of the nature of the divine. Yes, sir.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well, I don't think it is related to that for this reason, if our Lord does not possess, now I'm not sure I heard exactly what you said, would you repeat it again?

[Question from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well he did have direct lineage to Adam.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes, that is expressed in Scripture, of course. So he has a complete human nature, and it is as our human nature, apart from sin. So no, I think that otherwise you could attach the incarnation of our Lord and say it was not a true incarnation, which is what many of the Docetists did in the early church. They claimed that our Lord was not really a human being, and the apostles attacked that doctrine. No, he possessed human nature just as ours, but his human nature was preserved from sin by the action of the Holy Spirit, according to Luke chapter 1 verse 34 and 35. So it was by virtue of the miracle of the virgin conception that our Lord's human nature was preserved from sin. Well...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]

