



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 27:35-50

“The Death of the Redeemer”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We thank Thee for his death and we pray as we consider it tonight that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our understanding so that we come to see the significance of it. And may, Lord, we be able to understand in such a way that we can appreciate the Apostle Paul’s words, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Now Lord we commit our study to Thee in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is the death of Christ and of course this is a big subject and we could look at many, many passages in the New Testament in order to stress its significance. But I’m going to turn to one of my favorite ones. I have that option, you see, since I’m teaching the class, and consider this particular passage. It’s found in Matthew chapter 27 and it contains that strange utterance of our Lord on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

So let’s turn to Matthew chapter 27 and let’s read beginning at verse 35. This is page one thousand forty-one,

“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were two thieves, (we do not know the names of the two thieves but tradition says that their names were Dismus, the one who later repented, and Justus or Gestas.) There were two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, (apparently this was a scornful jerk of the head or at least a profound salaam in ridicule,) And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save, (you know this is very interesting to me that those who were the enemies of our Lord preached the gospel in the words that they reviled him with. He saved others, how true that was. And their very words afford us a gospel according to his enemies. He saved others, himself he cannot save. You see, they even in their accusations testify to the things that the Lord Jesus Christ had done.) If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, (every time I read this I think of General Booth saying, he said, ‘The Jews would have believed him if he had come down from the cross. We believe in him because he stayed up on the cross.’) He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God, (and you know, it’s also further interesting to me that they quote unwittingly Messianic passages, ‘He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God,’ and those opening statements, of course, come from Psalm 22. So unwittingly they quote the Old Testament Scriptures in their accusations.) The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? (I’m reading that as if I’m

translating the Aramaic words, these are not Hebrew words but Aramaic words.) That is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias, (now you can see why they thought that he might be calling for Elias. The Hebrew word for God, one of the words, was “El” and “my God” is “Eli”. And Elijah’s name in Hebrew and Aramaic was Elias. So his name, Jehovah, is my God was very close to “Eli” and so when they heard the Lord say ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,’ they thought that perhaps he was calling for Elijah.) Straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”

Now we want to center our attention tonight on the subject of the death of Christ. The Lord Jesus died a very strange death. He did not die as radiant Stephen died under a hail of stones. He did not die as Socrates in scornfully, superior, or resignation. But he died with one of the helpless, despairing cries of a man who seems to have utterly lost control of the circumstances in which he found himself, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

In fact really according to these accounts here our Lord died not so much with a cry but with a shriek. Not so much with a saying but with this despairing utterance as if he had lost everything. This statement, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” is one of seven which the Lord Jesus made when he was upon the cross. Remember that he made the first statement in the presence of the thieves. He said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And then secondly, speaking to one of the thieves who had first had reviled him but then apparently had repented and said, “Lord remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” He had said to him, “This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

His third statement was the statement that he made to Mary and John, “Woman, behold thy son, behold thy mother,” apparently turning his mother to the care of John. Then the fourth of the seven, “My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” And the fifth, a one word statement in the Greek text, “I thirst.” And the sixth, also a one word statement in the Greek text, “Tetelestai,” “It is finished.” And finally, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” the seventh.

Now if you remember as I have said these seven statements the central one is, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now it’s an interesting thing that this statement, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” is found in the Gospel of Matthew and it is found in the Gospel of Mark. The other six statements are found in these places; three of them are found in the Gospel of John and nowhere else, and three of them are found in the Gospel of Luke and nowhere else. So Luke has three by himself, John has three by himself, and Matthew and Mark combine in the one, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

New Testament scholars debate the relative priority of the books of the New Testament insofar as their writing is concerned. Some scholars, notably Roman Catholic scholars, feel that Matthew is the first gospel written. And a number of conservative Protestant scholars feel the same way. Some conservative Protestant scholars, and most liberal Protestant scholars, and some Roman Catholics who are liberal think that the Gospel of Mark was the first gospel written. Well that, of course, is an issue that doesn’t concern us particularly because this statement is found in both of these gospels. Regardless of whether Matthew is earliest or Mark is earliest, it is true that the early church for some time had as their only statement from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” As if to suggest that in this statement there is contained the revelation, the doctrine, the lesson of the cross of the Lord Jesus.

Now we know that the Lord Jesus suffered not only from men while he was here, he suffered also from Satan. But did you know that he also suffered from God? Did you

realize that the Old Testament said that he would suffer from God? For example, in Isaiah chapter 53, in verse 10, we read, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him.” So the Lord Jesus suffered from several sources. And here we find him crying out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And if we realize that he did suffer from God we must think without any further study that it is just possible that this is the moment in which he did suffer from God.

Now we could take up every word of these statements of the Lord Jesus which he made on the cross because they are tremendously important. Spurgeon said about this particular statement, “We must take up every word of this saddest of all utterances.” Luther said in one place, *Theologia crucis, theologia lucus*, which means, “The theology of the cross is the theology of light.” And I fully believe this, that if we understand the cross of Jesus Christ than we have the light of God on human existence. And if we do not understand the cross of Christ we do not have light on human existence.

And furthermore, if we do not understand the cross of Christ ourselves we do not have light on our existence and we cannot find our way throughout this world in which we live with any sense of purpose and understanding of that in which we find ourselves. I think, too, that it is a startling thing and a sobering thing to realize that even those who are not Christians have somehow or other sensed something of this.

For example, have you ever sung the hymn, “In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o’er the wrecks of time, all the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.” Have you ever sung that hymn? Well of course you have if you grew up in a Protestant church. Did you know that that hymn was not written by a Christian at all? It was written by a Unitarian. “In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o’er the wrecks of time, all the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.” It was written by Sir John Bowring and he was a famous Unitarian. But even he, in spite of the fact that he did not recognize the deity of Christ nor even the significance of the things that were happening upon the cross yet seemed to sense that somehow or other God’s truth was

bound up in that which happened when Jesus Christ hung and shed his blood on the cross at Galgatha. He, of course, saw him simply as an illustration of the love of God. But nevertheless he saw it as significant.

Well let's take a look now tonight at this statement, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” and see if we can discern something of the truth that is involved in it. Now the first thing we must do is look at the context and so let's take a look at verse 45, “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.” Now this may be puzzling to us and so I must say a word about it. Now I'm saying this word primarily for the adults because the children probably already understand this. These children, you know, I've learned a lot about them in the last few days. Do you know that their Sunday school teacher came to me and said, “Dr. Johnson, it is amazing what these young people are getting out of those classes on Monday night.” That's right [Laughter]. She came and said to me, “Why, they are really understanding the things that you're saying.” I knew they were understanding [Laughter] if they've got normal intelligence. But I'm worried about these adults here, you see. So I must say just a word about the way they reckon time in those days.

Now they did not start as we do with one o'clock in the morning and have twenty-four hours to the day. They normally had in the East at this time twelve hours in the day. And the twelve hours were used for daytime. In other words, there were twelve hours in the summer and twelve hours in the winter. The hours were just shorter in the wintertime than there were in the summertime. So the first hour in the morning was roughly our six o'clock but it was called one o'clock. So that six o'clock is in the middle of the day, six o'clock is twelve noon. Twelve o'clock is six p.m.

Now the Lord Jesus, it is not stated in this gospel, he hung on the cross from three to nine. Now what would that be according to our time, from the third hour to the ninth hour? Well that would be from nine o'clock until three o'clock in the afternoon. So when we read here from the sixth hour that is noon. “There was darkness over all the land

unto the ninth hour,” that means from twelve until three o’clock in the afternoon there suddenly came a supernatural darkness over all the land as the Lord Jesus Christ hung upon it. Why?

Well some have said that one reason why the darkness came is because Isaiah the prophet says that his visage was so marred more than any man. More than even the sons of men, and that our Lord had undergone such scourging and suffering and such punishment from men that he must have been such a repulsive spectacle physically now that God in a sense drew the curtain over the face of the Lord Jesus in order that men might not see him in his sufferings. Well that is possible but I do not think that that is the primary reason that darkness came over all the land.

I think that the reason that darkness came over all the land is that God wanted to give us a visual lesson of what was happening there. In the Bible darkness is always illustrative of sin. Light is illustrative of justice and righteousness, holiness and salvation. So when we see darkness coming over all the land, why, this is an evidence that the Lord Jesus is now entering into a dealing with sin. It is, in effect, the Father saying, “The darkness that I am causing to come over all the land interprets what is happening spiritually on the cross.” And what is happening spiritually on the cross is interpreted by the physical darkness that fell over all the land.

The early Christians used to say that Dionysius the Areopagite who was teaching a class in Egypt at the time said when this darkness came over all the land either a God is dying or the whole universe is going into disillusion. He was a lot closer than he realized.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.” Of course the Lord Jesus, remember, is hanging on the place which was called Galgatha. We call the place where the Lord Jesus Christ died Calvary. Now I’m not really too angry about that but we, of course, do not have any term “Calvary” in the New Testament. The term for the place where our Lord died is the Hebrew word Galgatha, which means the place of a skull. And in the Latin translation that was translated *calvaria*

which of course is that from which we get “Calvary”, so the term Calvary is strictly derived from the Latin translation and not from the Greek text or the Hebrew name or Aramaic name of the place where our Lord died. So the Lord Jesus did not die on Calvary, he died on Galgatha. But who am I, I cannot change hundreds of years of usage and I still like to sing about Calvary myself although I just make a mental note, it wasn’t Calvary, it was really Galgatha.

But nevertheless that’s a translation and I guess it’s acceptable and I know I won’t have anything to do with the change of it. So let’s pass on now the Lord Jesus is hanging on Galgatha, the place of the skull, there is darkness over all the land, and suddenly he cries out with a loud voice, I’ll have something to say about that in a little while, but notice he cries with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

Now let’s just take it apart tonight because these words are tremendously significant. And I want you to notice the way, first of all, in which the Lord Jesus addresses God. “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now stop for just a moment, I want to show you how to do a little Bible study tonight, a little meditation because you need this, you know. If you came to hear me every night teach the Bible you would learn a lot. Now I don’t say that because I’m a good teacher but I think that you would just naturally learn a lot from acquaintance. I would go over so many things that some things would come home to you and you would get them. But do you know that you would learn twice as much, at least, if you would take your own Bible and open it up and begin to study on your own?

Now I want to show you how to do this tonight because we’re just going to spend our time on this little portion here. Now this word, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,” but now notice, “Eli, Eli.” “My God, my God.” Now let’s go back for a moment to the seven statements that the Lord Jesus made on the cross. Do you remember the first one? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Then the second one, “This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” The third one, “Woman, behold thy son, behold thy

mother.” The fourth one, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Do you know I think that’s the only time the Lord Jesus ever addressed his Father as God?

And then the fifth, “I thirst.” The sixth, “It is finished.” And the seventh, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” Now have you noticed anything? Have you noticed that the first statement begins with “Father”? “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And the seventh statement concluded with, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” Have you noticed that he begins by speaking to the Father and he concludes by speaking to the Father. But here, for the only time in Scripture, he addresses God as God. Why is that? Why does he suddenly abandon, “My Father,” and say, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Why, without asking any questions about it at all we can say this that the Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledging a relationship here to deity, which is no longer paternal, not based upon father/son relationship. But it is judicial, based upon the fact that he is God and that he is a human being.

So the relationship is not paternal, but it is judicial and that would give us something of a clue, that somehow or other the Lord Jesus here is on the cross as the representative of men because he is not claiming this relationship which he has claimed throughout his existence up to this point and afterwards. But also notice this, that he says, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now I said the Lord Jesus died with a helpless, despairing cry as if all of his worlds had come tumbling down at this last moment of his human existence, but that is far, far from the truth. For you see, the Lord Jesus even though he was bearing the sin of the human race and crying out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” nevertheless still says, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Arthur Pink used to say, “It is a cry of distress, not a cry of distrust.” Even to the last point of his earthly, the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus never ceased in his human nature to trust God. “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

And furthermore, when you remember that this statement that he utters here is a quotation from Psalm 22 in the Old Testament then you see again what command the

Lord Jesus had of this situation. He was not a person who was at the end of his ropes, so to speak. But he is a man who is in full control of all of his faculties and he reaches back into the Old Testament Scriptures and selects just the passage that ought to be quoted at this point, reaches back into the psalms and takes that first verse of the 22nd psalm and uses it for a prayer. So he's not somebody who's wondering around in some cosmic darkness in a deserted no man's land of lack of trust in God. But he is a person who even though he is here in this judicial relationship to the Father he's still nevertheless trusting him. “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

Now you know when we talk about the atonement of Jesus Christ we frequently hear two kinds of preaching in these days. We hear some men who get up and say, “We can know nothing of an atonement.” Does not the Bible say in passages like Romans chapter 11, and verse 33 that we cannot really understand the things of God? You know Paul says in that chapter in that 33rd verse these words, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Who can understand what transpired on Calvary? We know that it was a tremendous event but we cannot expect to understand what transpired there. And so as far as a theory of the atonement is concerned we cannot have such a theory of the atonement.

Now this is one kind of emphasis that you find today in the preaching and teaching of the word of God. Then there's the other kind of emphasis. The other kind of emphasis says, in effect, we know everything there is to know about Calvary, it's all very simple, the Lord Jesus Christ was our substitute and there he bore our sins away. That's what we say about the cross, and further more that's all that we can say about the cross.

Now I think there's a lot of truth in that and don't you misunderstand me in the slightest because the word of God says, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

We'll never understand the cross of Calvary if we do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ was our substitute there. We'll never fully understand it. That's the beginning.

But I also would like to say this, there is a sense in which we know in part and we shall know fully when we are in the presence of the Lord. And while I affirm with every single evangelical minister of the truth that Jesus Christ was my substitute I want to add also this, that since this was a dealing of the eternal Son with the eternal Father that there is one sense in which I shall never fully comprehend, that which transpired when Jesus Christ cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” I say that he died for me, I know that. But I also think that there are some things that took place there that, well, we shall never fully comprehend until we are in the presence of the Lord. And while the foundation stone will be that he was my substitute who died for me, we'll see more of the marvels of the grace and glory of God than we ever dreamed of through that which the Lord Jesus accomplished.

Well let's go on now to the question, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now what kind of a why is this? Is this the why of a man who didn't understand? Is this the why of a man who was protesting? No, I don't think he was really protesting. I think it was the cry of a man who out of his human nature though in his divine nature he understood the end from the beginning, out of his human nature he is asking for further light. Maybe I can illustrate it very, very poorly by telling you of an experience that I had as a youngster.

In the neighborhood in which I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama it was a relatively new neighborhood and lots of new homes were being built in those days. It's a sobering thing to go back home and look at those homes and see how old they look now [Laughter]. I was just in Birmingham not so long ago and those new houses that I played around when I was a youngster, they look sort of weather beaten now, you know. And to think they were just new not so long ago.

But anyway we all loved to play with hammers and nails and I can remember as a little boy I used to take a hammer and stick it in my belt and my pocket, and we would

go around building little houses because all these men were all over the neighborhood building houses. We're building a house in Dallas and I went over there this afternoon and just up the street is a little house which some of the neighborhood children are building. With, of course, the lumber and bricks from the other houses there [Laughter] and you can see them carting them off. And they have a little house there just about two lots away from our place now. I wonder where they got those materials. But anyway, they're building them.

Well I can remember that I went up in a - we loved to climb trees and one day I can remember when I was about eight or nine years old we started to go up a tree and I never was particularly bold around a tree, but this one I was first up the tree and so I had to go right on up to the top. And when I got near the top of the tree it began to sway like this. And so I was a little worried about my hammer. And I remember taking the hammer out, I can still remember it, and handing it to the boy below me and saying, “Dick, hold this hammer for me while I go on up to the top.” And I started up to the top and I can remember him taking the hammer and then apparently he didn't know what to do with it so he just tossed it out like this. And the next thing I heard was this shriek from below the tree, about twenty, twenty-five feet below, and suddenly I saw my sister running across the vacant yard toward home. And she was crying and yelling and screaming at the top of her voice and I realized what had happened. The hammer had hit her upon the head. And we went home, I rushed home, and I remember going in the room and there she was on the bed and my mother saying, “Why did he do it, why did he do it?” Now of course she knew why he did it, but she was just having a little difficulty comprehending what had taken place because she had had her skull fractured, it turned out, by the hammer.

Well I think that possibly the Lord Jesus is saying this in something of that spirit. He knew, of course, why God must forsake him but out of his human nature as he entered fully into the experiences of the cross, for he had to do that to be our high priest,

he still cries out, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” as if to ask for more information.

Perhaps for more information from the inner standpoint, not a complaint, not a rejection of the will of God, but simply to know more of that which was happening to him.

“Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now let’s stop for just a moment and ask ourselves the question, why has the Father forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ? And I said a minute ago that we must, if we’re going to understand the cross, we must start with substitution. Now I fully believe that we can never understand God and the Bible if we do not understand this. And these are some of the reasons why it is absolutely essential that we recognize that the reason that the Lord Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” is that he was our substitute on the cross at Calvary. Here are some of the reasons.

Would a loving God forsake the only good man who ever lived? Think of it for a moment. We know that God is a loving God. By the way, we would never know that were it not for Christianity. This is a truth that men have derived from Christianity. If you hear men talk about God being good and God being love, ask them where they got that idea. Because, you see, the heathen never knew of a God who was loved, they never knew of a God who was good, this is Christian doctrine. This, of course, has been proclaimed far and wide and now men have laid hold of that but the reason they have this doctrine is because they have the Bible. This is God’s doctrine. But would a loving God forsake the only good man who ever lived, assuming that God is good and that God is loving? And here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the only good man who ever lived would a loving God forsake him? Of course not. Then he must be suffering for some other reason.

David said, “I have been young and now am I old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” And yet here is the righteous man forsaken of God. This is the one of whom God said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I’m well pleased. How is it possible then for him to cry out, “My God, my God, why hast

Thou forsaken me?” except on the basis of the fact that he was a substitute for me who were not good and took their punishment.

Would a loving God injure the only innocent man who had ever lived? The Lord’s prayers are always answered elsewhere and yet here on the cross, “I cry unto Thee in the day time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.” Our Lord’s prayers were always answered and yet according to the psalmist there is a sense in which as he hung on the cross for our sins that God did not answer his prayers.

The Lord was never left alone elsewhere and yet here he cries out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” He himself said, “Thou hast not left me alone,” concerning the Father. So the only explanation of this cry is that he was taking the place of others who deserved to be there.

There was an old woman who always talked about the atonement. One of her friends said to her, “Dinah, you’re always talking about the word atonement but do you understand what the word atonement means?” She said, “Honey, deed I does understand the word atonement, it means just this, he die or me die. He die, so me no die.” [Laughter] Now that’s very simple but that is exactly the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Last year one of the outstanding theologians from Britain was lecturing in Princeton Theological Seminary in the stone series. And in it he said this, “Jesus Christ stood in the stead of others, this is the heart of the atonement.” And that is true. That is why the Lord Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me,” he was taking your place and he was taking my place. He did not deserve to be there, we deserved to be there. But he, in wonderful grace, died for me. As Paul puts it, “He hath made him to be sin for us, him who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”

Why is it necessary for there to be such a substitution? Why is it necessary for Jesus Christ to take my place? Why this is necessary because of the demands of a holy

God. God is absolutely holy. He cannot receive sinners into his presence. In the Old Testament we read of him, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.” Do you know what that means? That means that you cannot enter the presence of God as you are. He cannot look upon you, he cannot observe sin for if he observes sin he must abolish sin. He must destroy. We cannot come into the presence of the eternal light. You know how to come into the presence of light blinds you. Well in the spiritual sphere if you were to enter the presence of the one who is eternal light that would be your destruction as a sinner. You cannot abide the presence of God. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity, and we are sinners. We are rebels against God. We cannot enter his presence.

As the psalmist said, “I cry unto Thee in the day time, and Thou hearest not, and in the night seasons, and am not silent. But Thou art holy.” Thou art holy. You see, he is a holy God and so something must be done about our sin. There must be a substitution.

You know, if you go all through the Bible we are inclined to think that the greatest truth about God is his love, but it's not so. His preeminent attribute is his holiness. Just take, for example, Abraham. He came into the presence of God and he prayed and then finally he said, “Lord in your presence I am but dust and ashes.” Job said, when he really saw God, “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,” when he really saw God. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” Daniel was in the presence of the Lord and he said his comeliness was turned in him into corruption. And when John the apostle saw the Lord Jesus, when he saw him in his glory he fell at his feet as if he were dead.

The reason there must be a substitution is because we are sinners. And if we entered the presence of God we could only be judged. And so someone must take our

judgment for us. If we were to understand what it meant for the Lord Jesus to undergo this judgment we would have to take him in illustrations and multiply them to infinity.

Let me illustrate it this way, let's suppose that we have a lovely girl who has grown up in a lovely home, a lovely Christian home, and there's been a strong Christian testimony and a strong emphasis on holy living. And this young lady has become a Christian at an early age and has grown in grace and is among human beings an example of purity and holiness and righteousness and genuine faith and trust in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's suppose that she should be something like the Virgin Mary. And then let's suppose that it should be necessary for her to go to live in a house of prostitution. Now if you multiply the sense of shame to infinity then you would have something of an understanding of what it meant for Jesus Christ to bear our sin for us.

In the Bible you can see some evidences of an attempt to present this to men. For example, in the Old Testament in the sacrifices there is a sin offering and it is stated with regard to the sin offering that the sin offering shall be offered without the camp because, you see, sin is so hateful to God that he cannot have fellowship with it and it cannot come into the city of God. Or take the leper, now the leper is also an illustration of sin. And specific rules are given in the Old Testament for the cleansing of the leper. The reason that God does this is because you're a leper spiritually and I'm a leper spiritually. And certain things are said about the leper, when the leper is recognized as a leper he shall have no covering on his head, he shall rend his clothes, he shall put a covering on his lip, and he shall go in and out the city whenever he's in the city crying, “Unclean, unclean,” so that no one shall touch him. And at night he should go outside the camp for he cannot live in Israel.

Why? Because the leper is a picture of you and me. We cannot exist in the presence of God. We cannot be among the redeemed as long as we have our sin upon us. We are lepers. Now when the leper is cleansed, remember, the birds are slain, the blood is shed, and one of them flies off into the air, typical of the death and resurrection

of the Lord Jesus, and then the leper is announced clean on the basis of the work of God. Testified to in that which is typical of the blood and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

In the Old Testament remember Israel murmured at one time, “And the Lord sent fiery serpents in among them, and the serpents bit much people and they died.” And then Moses went to the Lord and complained or asked for some relief and the Lord said, “Moses, take a brazen serpent and put it on a pole and whenever an Israelite is bitten by the fiery serpent if he will look to the brazen he shall live.” And that was Moses’ gospel to the Israelites who were destined to die when they were bitten by the snakes.

Now in the New Testament the Lord Jesus said this, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so much the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Did that ever startle you as you read it? The Lord Jesus likened unto a serpent? What a strange thing. The Lord Jesus likened unto an angel, perhaps, but a serpent? Why, a serpent was the instrumentality of Satan which brought sin into the human race. Why is the Lord Jesus likened unto a serpent? How can you picture him as a serpent? Why, you can picture him as a serpent when he bears the sin of the human race. This, I say, is why Paul said, “He hath made him to be sin.”

Do you know that the word serpent is a word that is related to the word brass? The brazen serpent. The word for brass is related to the word for serpent. The word for brass is “nechosheth”, the word for serpent is “nachash”. You know what the Hebrews called brass? They called it serpentish metal. That’s what they said. It’s serpentish. See, it’s serpentish, it’s not gold. It’s closer to brass. It’s cheap, dollar and a half [Laughter].

Serpentish metal, and so when the brazen serpent was put on the pole it was the serpentish serpent, you see. Stress upon the connection with sin. Every Israelite as he looked at that serpent would think about the serpent in the Garden of Eden that brought all of this trouble upon us. And that’s why the Lord Jesus, I say, is likened to a serpent

because he is the sin offering. He hath made him to be sin for us, him who knew no sin that the righteousness of God might become ours.

So the Lord Jesus then cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” for the simple reason that he was taking our place on the cross at Calvary. He was bearing my judgment. He was being the sin offering for me, he was being the brazen serpent for me so that I might go free.

Well I said at the beginning that I was going to say something about this loud voice. Before I do let me remind you of another startling thing here. The Lord Jesus is called the light of the world, isn't he. And yet here the light of the world has gone out. We often wonder what it means to be in hell. What must it mean to be in hell? Well in the Bible hell is said to be everlasting separation from the Lord. And I wonder if right here we do not have some insight into what hell must be, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” This is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. But now notice this, “Jesus cried with a loud voice.”

Now I'll tell you something of personal experience, some years ago I was giving a series of messages for the first time on these seven statements that the Lord Jesus Christ made. And I had been preaching in the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina in a series of meetings. And I was on the way home and I was scheduled to preach on this fourth statement. And I had my Greet text in the Delta plane as we were coming back from Atlanta and I can remember now just I had the Greek testament, meditating over these words in this particular passage. Doing as Spurgeon said, turning up every one of them to see if I could discover what the meaning was. And I came to this statement here which said that, “Jesus cried with a loud voice,” and I asked myself the question, why is it necessary for the Lord Jesus to cry with a loud voice? Why, surely God could understand him if he prayed. Why did he have to shout? Why did he have to shriek, so to speak?

And as I meditated upon it the Lord brought home to my heart a particular passage from John chapter 11, the Lord Jesus stood at Lazarus’s grave once, remember? And he prayed something like this in John chapter 11. He prayed, “O Father I know that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” In other words he said as much as to say to God, “Now Lord it’s not necessary for me to shout to Thee, it’s not necessary for me to utter this prayer audibly, I know that you hear me always. But for the sake of those that stand by I’ve said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me.” And so he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” And it just occurred to me that it might well be that the reason the Lord Jesus Christ cried out with a loud voice was that men might hear, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” and meditate upon it. That it might even be put down in writing so that ultimately he said this not for himself, he said it for others. He said it for me. That I might come to understand what it means for Jesus Christ to die on that cross in my place.

One of the great missionaries of the past generation or two was a man by the name of Henry C. Mabie. He really was a missionary statesman more than missionary. And I think of him as I think of this statement because of an experience that he had. Surely Paul, when he was thinking of the cross, must have used those words, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” But Dr. Mabie said that he heard of the preaching of the gospel to a South African tribe and the missionary was preaching the gospel with great fervor. And as he was describing the things that happened on the cross of the Lord Jesus the chief of the tribe to which he was speaking suddenly stopped him and said, “Hold on, hold on, take Jesus Christ down from that cross, take him down I say! Jesus Christ does not belong on that cross, I belong on that cross.” You see, he had pierced through to the significance of the cross that Jesus Christ was there for me.

In perfect love he dies. For me he dies. For me. Oh all atoning sacrifice, I cling by faith to Thee. If that’s your sentiment then you’re a Christian. If that’s not your

sentiment you're not yet a Christian. And may God help you to put your faith and trust in him who cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” not for others. Not for Dr. Johnson only, but for you.

Shall we bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus, the gospel that centers in his death. We thank Thee that he took our place, died in our stead. And though Lord we do not fully understand all of the eternal things that transpired there we understand enough to say we thank Thee, oh God, for the Lord Jesus Christ. May our understanding as we continue to study, grow. And may our devotion to him also increase. For we ask it in his name. Amen.

[Johnson] Now is there a question or so?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes, he was the sin offering. He was taking the judgment that was due you and me at that point.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] He was sin. And so the Father, if we put it in human terms, he must turn his face from the Son and judge him. And so in that moment he was bearing our judgment. That's the only explanation that satisfies. It's extremely important, extremely important. Any others?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well Psalm 22, I think, was written by David.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well that - what version do you have?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well if you'll notice the superscription it says, “A psalm of David.” But the reason I hesitated is because in the Hebrew text the word for authorship is a little preposition *la* which does mean to, or for, or by. And I wondered if maybe you had another version which had translated it slightly different.

But no, this particular psalm is a Davidic psalm. So it was written by David. In fact, it is one of those psalms we call Messianic psalms. That is, it is a psalm in which the psalmist is taken beyond his own experiences to write under the inspiration of the spirit of the one who comes to bear our sins.

Now David being the king of Israel frequently, and being a prophet the New Testament says too, he frequently in the psalms that he composed wrote of the great king who would come. For remember David had been told that of his seed would come one who would be the king who would have a kingdom forever. And so David frequently writes of the Messiah to come. And this is a Messianic psalm. He begins by describing some of his own experiences but as commentators have noticed he goes far beyond any historical occurrences in his own life and goes on to write of Christ. Yes.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well the darkness, it is stated, lasted for three hours. You remember in that forty - is it 45th verse? That he says there was darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, is that not right? “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour,” and so there was three hours of darkness. But the cry was a cry that took place during that darkness.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes, we don't know exactly but it was relatively short, yes. The reason for this, some have had difficulty with this too, it's only natural we should think about all of these things. If Jesus Christ is bearing my punishment, and my punishment is for eternity, how can he do it in time? You know, in a short time like this? Well this of course is something - this is what I was saying that we did not understand everything that took place at the cross. But we do know this, that the Lord Jesus being an infinite person is able to bear, because he is an infinite person, he is able to bear infinite judgment. And he must not necessarily bear the punishment forever in time if it is sufficient in degree, you see. And so between him and the Father he bore our punishment to the fullest even though it was in a relatively short period of time. This because of the infinite capabilities for bearing judgment, and also because the infinite merits of the Son of God but apparently that took place in a relatively short period of time.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No I think that was in connection with that last statement, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” which is given in the Luken passage in Luke chapter 23, and yes, verse 46. You'll notice then, “When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said,

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”  
So that was apparently in connection with the last cry which he offered.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes, that he did not give the content of that.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well this of course is one reason why we need more than just the  
Gospel of Luke, or Gospel of Matthew, as the case may be. Yes.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well I think the best Bible for ordinary use, particularly if you're just  
beginning to study the Bible seriously, is the Scofield edition of the King James Version.  
And the reason I like that is because of the notes that are contained with it. It's like  
having a Bible teacher at your side. Now Scofield is not right in every point that he has in  
his Bible, naturally, because he was a human being but...

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well the Scofield edition is the thing I still recommend that people start  
with. Of course it's good later on to get other versions and read them, you will find some  
profit in them. But the value of the Scofield Bible is it has simple doctrinal notes which  
help as you read along. It's the best thing in the world for that, I've never known  
anything like it, yeah. I hardly ever read them anymore, the notes, but I really received a

great deal of help from them when I first began to read the Bible. I read every one of them in it.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse who led me to the Lord when I asked him the question, “What should I do about reading the Bible,” he told me to get a Scofield Bible and he said, “Begin at the Gospel of John and read through the New Testament. Then come back and read Matthew, Mark, and Luke.” The reason he said that, I discovered afterwards, was because the truth from John through the end of the book is especially directed to us in the age in which we live. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are extremely important but they are accounts of our Lord’s life in ministry and I remember in his earthly life he ministered in the age of the law, bringing the truth to Israel. Tremendously important but nevertheless it was better to start at the other place, and then go back and read Genesis through Malachi, he said. And that’s exactly what I did. I read every page. And I read every not in the Scofield Bible. And I really got a good theological education. I had to unlearn a few little points here and there but that Bible is very reliable.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] That’s not inspired, that is the notes, but that’s very helpful.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] They are being revised, yes. There is a committee that has been working on the Scofield Bible notes for about six or seven years. But that will not come out, well they are saying 1965 or 1966. And I think it’s not a good idea to wait that long to study the word [Laughter].

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well of course we have to go on with what we have, you know.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] No I really, no seriously the Pilgrim Bible is very good and if you can't get a Scofield I'd get that. But you've got both so...alright, well rejoice in your [unintelligible]. But you are now ready to get into advanced study and read some of the Scofield Bible.