



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“What Has Christ Done?, or His Sufferings in History”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity of the study of the Scriptures. And, now, tonight, as we consider a very solemn subject, the sufferings of the Messiah in relationship to our theology course, we pray that Thou wilt guide and direct and enable us to appreciate the significance of these great events in Messiah’s life. And may too, Lord, our response be not only a response that touches the mind, but may it also touch our hearts as well. We commit each one to Thee for Thy blessing upon them, and upon us together.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is “What Has Christ Done?, or His Sufferings in History.” Last time, we considered the sufferings of our Lord in type, and we sought to investigate the Old Testament foreshadowings of the sufferings of our Lord. Now, tonight, we want to look at these sufferings in history or the sufferings as they are set forth in the life of our Lord which he lived upon this earth. And, of course, in coming to the sufferings of Christ, we come to one of the most sacred and, yet, mysterious subjects in the word of God. And undoubtedly, I do not think we should get any objection from this

audience, it is one of the most important of the subjects that concern Jesus Christ. It is fundamental to the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

The Scriptures of both covenants, old and new covenant, indicate this. Isaiah, as we have been studying him in the Isaiah classes, stresses the fact that there is to come, a suffering servant of Jehovah. His acute sufferings are set forth in such passages as the 50th chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, and particularly, our famous chapters of 52 and 53. And, of course, there are other scattered references in the Prophecy of Isaiah even in the first part of the book in which the Messianic king is set forth. The uniqueness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, other prophets suffered, consists in the fact that he did not suffer in consequence of his mission only but as a means to accomplishing his mission. The prophets suffered because they preached what they preached and Jesus Christ did too, but his suffering was really the means to the accomplishment of his mission. And in that sense, he differs from all of the prophets who came before him. He is the great prophet, but he is more than prophet, he is the priest who offers the sacrifice that removes sin.

Our Lord, of course, emphasized the fact that he was going to suffer. They did not seem to grasp it, but over and over again, he set forth the fact that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer. And finally, after the sufferings were over, he berated the disciples for their failure to understand the significance of his mission. For example, in the passage in Luke chapter 24 in which he speaks with the Emmaus disciples. Remember, he said,

“O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory.”

Now, I think it is perfectly evident from this statement that our Lord made that if a man truly read the Bible, as it should be read, he would not be surprised by the sufferings of the Messiah. And so our Lord spoke to them as fools and slow of heart to perceive that

he must suffer. Later on, Peter enlarges upon this theme in his first chapter of his letter in which he speaks about the prophets who searched diligently, what time or what circumstances the prophets were speaking about when they spoke about the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should come afterward. And so it is the testimony of both covenants; the old by way of anticipation, the new by way of explication of what really happened that the Messiah must suffer.

Now in our treatment, we’re going to divide the subject matter into three sections, as you can tell from the outline: “Christ’s Sufferings in Life, or His Sufferings Before the Cross.” And second, “Christ’s Sufferings in Death, or His sufferings of the Cross.” And third, “Christ’s Suffering in Resurrection, or His Sufferings After Death.” Now there is, as Dr. Chafer points out in his theology, an immeasurable inequality between these aspects of his sufferings. All of us, I’m sure, would realize that the sufferings of our Lord in death are far more important than the sufferings which he suffered in life. And, surely, they are tremendously more important than the sufferings which he suffers in resurrection. We shall see that he really does suffer in resurrection, but the significance of those sufferings cannot be compared to the sufferings of his death. And so we recognize this, even though we are going to look at this in a three-fold way.

Well, let’s don’t waste anymore time. Let’s look right at the first section of our outline, “Christ’s Sufferings in Life, or His Sufferings Before the Cross.” And Capital A – “His Daily or The Daily Temptations.” Now under this head, I am lumping all of his privations of life, the hatred of the Jews, his persecutions, and related types of sufferings. And I would like for you to turn and read again with me, John chapter 15, verses 18 through 25.

Now, I was not here yesterday, and so I do not know precisely the section that Bill McRae covered in his Bible class, but I think he was about at this section. But some of you were not there, and so let’s read beginning with the 15th chapter in the 18th verse through the 25th verse. “If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated

you.” Now remember, Jesus is giving these words to the apostles in the Upper Room before his Cross.

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you; The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law. They hated me without a cause.”

Now, you can see from this that in the 18th verse, for example, it states that the world hated Jesus Christ. We also notice in the 20th verse, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me.” They persecuted our Lord. The causes of the sufferings which Jesus bore in his life arise from several things. First of all, he was Lord of all, and yet he became a menial servant, a new position for him. And arising out of his position as a servant, it was inevitable that he should suffer. He also suffered because of his contact with this world’s atmosphere of pollution. I am sure, so far as I can tell, that the Bible does not stress this, but nevertheless, I am just as sure that Jesus did suffer by the very fact that he had to come into contact with people such as you and me. Furthermore, his knowledge of prospective sufferings, that is, that he would suffer had an indelible impress upon our Lord. The very fact that he knew that he would suffer was cause for suffering in his life. I think you can see that if you read a passage such as Mark

chapter 10 in verse 32. Now, that passage reads this way. “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and they were amazed. And they that followed were afraid.” If anything in the gospels is authentic, this statement, which is made by Mark, is. As Jesus begins the last journey to the city of Jerusalem in order to suffer there, there suddenly seems to come over him, a desire to quicken his pace to get on to Jerusalem. And the disciples sensed something of the disposition of our Lord, and the disposition of our Lord was something that caused them to be afraid. They fell back behind him as he took his long strides before them, and Mark says, “They were amazed and that they were afraid.” Now, of course, the text does not really tell us why Jesus lengthened his step, moved out in front of them, and why they felt afraid. But I think that Bengel, the German commentator, two hundred years ago, came right to the heart of it when he said that, “Jesus was dwelling in his passion.”

And so as he began these last steps toward Jerusalem, there already had fallen upon him, the sense of the fact that he must suffer in Jerusalem. And it was already a troubling thing to him. Now, the climax of this particular troubling is reached in Gethsemane shortly after this, but we can already see the beginning of it there. And, of course, our Lord suffered because of the persecution of him, as we have just read. And yet he concludes this section by saying, “They hated me without a cause.” In other words, there was no real ultimate reason why Jesus should be hated. They had no leg to stand upon, but the fact is that they did. The consequences of these sufferings are not insignificant. The reason that Jesus suffered in life is related to the fact that he is now our great high priest. Later on in our studies, I think this will come out. We’ll spend a little time on it probably, but we have already commented upon the fact that Jesus was a high priest, and these sufferings of life were designed to fit him for high priesthood.

The climax of them again is Gethsemane, but remember when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews concludes his description of Gethsemane, he says that “He is saluted forever, a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” So that his sufferings in the

Garden in Gethsemane are designed to show to us that he is a high priest who understands us, and from his standpoint, they are sufferings which are designed to make it very evident that he is not only a human being, but a humane high priest who understands. And because he understands, he is able to execute his priestly office with true understanding. So from our standpoint, they are an assurance to us. From his standpoint, they are the actual experience of what you and I must undergo from time to time. And he, of course, therefore understands us because of what he has suffered. They enabled him to gain the experience necessary that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.

Well, let’s move on to the second of the testings, which is more specific. Capital B - The Virgin Birth - Temptation. And will you turn with me to John chapter 8 in verse 41. Well, this testing is really not emphasized in the Bible, and I’m only really offering it to you as something for you to think about. Our Lord was born of a virgin, as I suggested to you when we discussed the virgin birth once. But really, Jesus was born as you and I are born, but his conception was a unique conception. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of a virgin. It is all right for us to speak of the virgin birth, if we mean that he was born of a woman who was a virgin.

But sometimes we fail to remember that Jesus was born, just as you and I are born, and that his human experience extends even to the fact of birth. The conception was the supernatural thing. The birth, the pregnancy and birth were, so far as I can tell, perfectly normal. So we really when we speak about the virgin birth temptation, we have to understand both aspects of this. But you can be sure that Jesus’ birth, as something unique, was known to be unique among the Jews. There are evidences of it, for example in the statements of Scripture, in Mark in the 6th chapter and the 3rd verse when our Lord is referred to by the inhabitants of his city. Remember, they say somewhat slurringly, “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?” Now, if you were a Jew, you would immediately sense there’s something the matter there. No man is ever called the son of a woman.

He’s called the son of his father in Judaism. But he is called the son of Mary, because so far as they were concerned, there was a large question over the birth of Jesus Christ.

I had a friend, about fifteen years ago, who heard me preach on the virgin birth, and he liked the message so much that he mentioned it to one of his Jewish friends downtown who was in the clothing business. And they were having a cup of coffee together and his Jewish friend, and I’m sure that he didn’t speak out of any unnecessary malice, it was just what he had been taught. He said, “Oh, there’s nothing to that virgin birth legend. The truth of the matter is that Joseph and Mary just got in trouble, and Jesus was born in that way.” Now, you can be sure that in the day in which our Lord lived, in a little community where so many things about one another were known, that they knew the mystery of our Lord’s birth. The difference is this, that the Jews interpreted it in a different way from the way that the Christians interpreted it. The early Christians interpreted it as a virgin birth. The early Jews interpreted it as a natural birth in illegitimacy. And that is evident, not only from the Bible in a statement like this, it is also evident from Jewish tradition in which there is an account, several accounts as a matter of fact, of the birth of Jesus. And it is set forth as an illegitimate birth and even the name of someone who is supposed to have been the father is found in some of the traditions.

Now, I think you have an evidence of some of the slurring attitude that the Jews had in the statement in John 8, verse 41. In one of the controversies of our Lord, we read, “Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him; we be not born of fornication. We have one father, even God.” And you can tell from that, “we be not born of fornication,” that there seems to be implicit in this, the recognition of the fact that Jesus’ death, the birth, was different. They have interpreted it as an illegitimate birth, and I’m sure, in my own mind, I think this is certainly not a great deal of source material upon which to base what I’m going to say and I recognize that, but I am sure, in my own mind, that our Lord, and Mary also, suffered because of the supernatural character of our Lord’s birth.

Capital C - The Wilderness Temptation. Now, we have already talked about the wilderness temptation, and for the sake of time, I’m going to pass this one by. It is an important event in our Lord’s life. It is described for us in Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 through 11, and you’ll remember that the suffering of our Lord there, had its origin in Satan. And its object was both the body and the soul of our Lord. The cause of the suffering in testing was related to Satan’s desire to have our Lord take a short cut to his Messiahship, and to his sonship, and to world blessing. But our Lord, as Abraham’s seed, realized that Abraham’s seed must die. Christ cannot become anti-Christ, and so he has to die and, therefore, he must refuse the temptations that arise from Satan. The consequences are that he has been seen to be a perfectly qualified being morally, as Davidic sovereign. He is also perfectly qualified morally to be our Savior. That temptation is important.

Let’s move on to the Petrine Temptation because this one is not often recognized for what it really is. Let’s read together verses 21 through 23 of Matthew chapter 16. Now, Jesus has just begun to announce the fact that he is going to suffer and to die. Verse 21 of Matthew chapter 16 reads,

“From that time forth Jesus began to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him saying; Be it far from me Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter; Get thee behind me Satan. Thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

Now this is in a sense, a further Satanic attack upon our Lord, but it is an attack that is made through Peter. And once again, there is the temptation to refuse the obedience that would lead to the Cross.

Capital E - The Gethsemane Temptation. Let’s turn to Matthew chapter 26, verse 36 through verse 46. Now, it won’t hurt you to read the Scripture. So will you listen as I read verses 36 through 46.

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples; Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them; My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed saying; O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter; What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” If this temptation took one hour, just one hour, tremendous events took place within that one hour. “He went away again the second time and prayed saying; O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” Now, that request is not the same as the first, and I challenge you sometime to just take a look at it and see what is different about it. “And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them; Sleep on now, and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”

This is the supreme testing before the testing of the cross. In the last events of our Lord’s life upon the earth, both Judas and Peter are sifted. In fact, in a way, we can say that Judas, Peter and our Lord were sifted. Judas was sifted and found to be all chaff. Peter was sifted and found to be part wheat and part chaff. But our Lord was sifted and

found to be all wheat. There is a great difference between our Lord and Peter and Judas. “Here he wrestles with the cup which our sins had mingled,” Professor Denny said. Again, in its character, it had Satan for its origin. You’ll remember that after the temptation in Luke we read, “Then the devil departed from him for a season.” From time to time, Satan came back to test our Lord, and he surely was testing him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Why did Jesus suffer in Gethsemane? What is the cause of his agony? We could say, “Surely, his horror of sin and death is involved in it.” We read that he was “sore amazed” in Matthew. Humanity naturally shrinks from the disillusion of death. There is no man who naturally seeks death. Even when men commit suicide, they do not naturally seek death. We know this from our birth because we are born with the fear of death in our souls. Now, this was the first approach of our Lord to the serious aspect of his death. Now he is in the last few hours, and it’s almost as if he can see, in the fact that he falls upon the ground and writhes in agony, his horror of sin and death. Remember, Jesus was unfallen man. Death had no claim whatsoever upon him. He was not fallen man, unfallen man. He does not respond to death, even as a martyr responds to death. It is something that is foreign to him. A martyr might, under certain circumstances, seek death, even though it is unnatural to him as a man, but Jesus is completely man, an unfallen man. I am sure that there is the horror of sin and death in his agony, but there is more to it than that. I’m sure too, that there is a sense in which Jesus was harassed by the world of fallen spirits, in the agony of Gethsemane.

In Luke chapter 22, verse 53, about this same time Jesus said, “Now is your hour and the power of darkness.” And so the power of darkness falls over all of his last hours, and I think he writhed in agony because of the struggle that was going on with the powers of the world of fallen spirits. But the one thing that undoubtedly stands out above everything else as the cause of the suffering in Gethsemane, is the fact that Jesus now anticipates the divine condemnation for sin. He realizes now, as he has approached

to the cross, in his human nature, that he is going to be the sin offering. And for our Lord, who had an understanding of spiritual things, it could not help but produce agony to realize that he is now going to bear the curse of the broken law. You know, that’s a terrible thing. Jesus is going to bear the curse of the broken law. He is going to come under the judgment of God. Now, do you find difficulty in understanding that? Do you find difficulty in comprehending it? Do you know why you do? Because you are so sinful. That’s why. If you had an understanding of what sin really is in the sight of God, if you really saw it for what it was, not only an insult directed toward the throne of the sovereign of the universe, not only slander against the God of heaven, but a slap in his face, I think you would understand what it meant for our Lord to anticipate that now he must bear the condemnation of a broken law. And a broken law, not only in the case of one individual, but in the case of all who shall believe upon him. Jesus is going to bear that curse, and for him who had a moral understanding of sin, such as you and I shall never have, this was agony. Agony.

You know, some theologians have said, and Abelard was perhaps the most famous one, that “Jesus died as an example, and that the example of his innocent death is designed to inculcate love in our hearts, to change our hearts, to reconcile us to God as we meditate upon what he did. Not that he died as an objective sacrifice for us, but he died in order to produce a subjective change in our hearts.” That is called the Abelardian view of Jesus’ death, the exemplary view of the atonement.

Now, if any theory is shown to be utterly inadequate to explain our Lord’s death that theory is by the agony of Gethsemane. If Jesus died as an example, as an example of how we should die, and as an example of the love of God, the agony in Gethsemane is a very strange thing. Abelard said not only that Jesus died as an example in the sense that his death was to produce a change in our hearts, but he died also to show us how to die. But Gethsemane does not show us how to die. Stephen may show us how to die. Some of the martyrs of the Christian church may show us how to die, but Jesus died in an

agony writhing upon the ground. No, the exemplary theory of the atonement and all of its ramifications cannot explain the agony in Gethsemane. The only thing that can explain the agony in Gethsemane is the fact that Jesus was going to bear the judgment of a God whose law had been broken.

Now, these are the sufferings in his life. I think through all of the sufferings of his life, we can discern the lines of the passion of our Lord for our souls. And if, of course, our Lord had not even died at Golgotha, we should have a certain evidence of the fact that he loved us. For these sufferings do show us what he did for us. Someone has written, “I cannot understand the woe which thou wert pleased to bear. O dying lamb, I’ll only know that all my hope is there.” And while for us, there is more to it than his sufferings in life; they show us that he did care. The difference between Christianity and all other religions is that Christianity presents a God who cares, and all other religions present a God for whom we have to do something in order to make him care. Every single one outside of Christianity presents that kind of God, but this God is different.

Now let’s look secondly, at Christ’s Sufferings in Death, or The Sufferings of the Cross. Now, we have talked about these things quite a bit in Isaiah, and I know it would be repetition to go over some of those facets, so I’m going try to look at it a little bit different and add a few things that we may not have covered. Most of us are acquainted with the fact that the Passion Week of our Lord is really a section of time that is, in the final analysis, somewhat brief. Isn’t it striking that the Gospels, which describe at least three years, probably, of our Lord’s life, describe the events of his life so unevenly. While it is true the majority of the Gospels are devoted to the events that precede the one week, but a disproportionate amount of the Gospels, is devoted to one week of our Lord’s ministry. If you look at the Gospel of Mark, for example, it is heavily weighted in a description of the events of the last week. It’s almost as if the evangelists, in the way in which they constructed their Gospels, recognized the preeminent significance of the last

week of the ministry of our Lord. It’s their way of saying, “This is the important thing in his life. The other things are important, but this is the most important thing.”

Holy Week begins on Sunday and concludes on Friday. Now, I put “Holy Week” in parentheses in quotes because it is not called “Holy Week” in the Bible. Sunday, there took place the triumphal entry of our Lord, on Monday, the incident of the cursing of the fig tree, and the cleansing of the Temple, on Tuesday, it was the day of questions, in which our Lord answered the questions of the Pharisees and scribes, and put some questions of his own. Probably on this day, he gave the “Olivet Discourse” and the incident of the withering of the fig tree took place then too. On Wednesday, those scholars are differing in their interpretations of this. Probably, Jesus was silent although the plotting of the leaders continued. Thursday was the time of the “Upper Room Discourse,” the Last Supper, and Gethsemane. According to Jewish reckoning of time, these things occurred on Friday because they occurred after sundown and then on Friday, the arrest, the trials, and the crucifixion and burial. Those events occurred on the day before the Sabbath. This was all in accordance with the typology of the Old Testament. Jesus suffered on Friday.

Occasionally, you will hear people say that Jesus must have suffered on Wednesday because, after all, did not our Lord say, “The son of man must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Now, that is a woeful misunderstanding, in my opinion, of Jewish reckoning of time. Part of a day for a Jew was an entire day of twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours was one day of twenty-four hours. Part of a day, another day, was twenty-four hours. So a part of a day is equivalent to twenty-four hours. Jesus was put in the grave on Friday afternoon before the conclusion of Friday. Jewish reckoning of time was twenty-four hours. He was in the grave all day Saturday, from Friday night until Saturday night. that is, twenty-four hours. He arose on the first day of the week, early in the morning apparently. And that is twenty-four hours according to Jewish reckoning of time. So that Jesus was three days and three nights in the heart of

the earth, according to Jewish reckoning of time. So he suffered on Friday. The tradition of the Christian church is unanimous. Jesus died on Friday.

It is not until the 19th and 20th Centuries that we have men saying that Jesus died on Thursday or that he died on Wednesday. And I must confess, that when the tradition of the early church is unanimous, I’m inclined to accept the tradition of the early church thinking that it is probably more likely that they who had first hand acquaintance with the events, and were much closer to them than you or I, know a great deal more about them than a Bible teacher in the twentieth century who doesn’t have access to the facts. And furthermore, when we see how the Bible reckons time itself, I am convinced that Jesus died on Friday. Now, let me hasten to say, in case some of my friends listen to my tape, who don’t agree with me, I’m not mad at you, although I think you are dead wrong. I just want you to understand that whether you believe it occurred on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday does not really affect our Bible doctrine too seriously, but I think he died on Friday. And when we get to heaven, I’ll say, “I told you so.”

With Gethsemane, I’m just kidding, you know, with Gethsemane the battle with God was over. Our Lord faced now the battle with men. Schilder’s title is called of this section, The Trials of our Lord, “The harmony profaned, the perfect round is broken.” And he refers to the fact that during these last few hours, the twelve apostles become eleven by virtue of Judas’ defection. Well, the order of the trials which Jesus underwent is something like this. You don’t have to put them down in your notes, but first of all, Jesus appeared before Annas. Then, he appeared before Caiaphas, who was Annas’ son-in-law, and the political high priest. Then, there was a formal morning trial before Caiaphas. Jesus was condemned. He was condemned of blasphemy, but unfortunately, the Jews could not put anyone to death in Roman times. And so they had to think up an accusation that the Romans would respond to. And so Jesus was not only tried by the religious leaders, but he was tried by the civil leaders. The Sanhedrin couldn’t put to death anyone. The Romans would not accept the charge of blasphemy as worthy of

death, and so as a result of this, our Lord is brought before Pilate, first of all, and he is charged with sedition.

And you’ll remember that Pilate could not handle this hot potato and when he heard that Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee was in Jerusalem, he sent him to Herod because he felt that since Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee and Jesus was a Galilean, perhaps he could get him off of his back by doing that. Herod was anxious to see him but Jesus didn’t even speak a word to Herod. And finally, Herod sent him back. It was too hot for him to handle too. And finally, at the second appearance before Pilate, Pilate the cowardly political schemer, looked at truth and discerned her not there where she stood, even though he said, “What is truth?” And the result was that Pilate ultimately consented to the judgment of the Jews and ruled that Jesus was worthy of death, though he himself tries to absolve himself from the blame because of the fact that he made himself another king.

Now, the culmination of the passion, Capital B. And the passage that I looked at here is Matthew chapter 27, verses 45 through 49, and that’s only a suggestion. That’s the passage in which Jesus, finally, in the central utterance of the cross cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” You’ll remember that before our Lord was placed on the cross, he was the object of grim barrack room jesting. He was clothed in purple. A crown of thorns was placed upon his head. I think it was crammed down upon his head and they mockingly spoke of him as the King of the Jews. Little, of course, did they realize that what they were doing was acting as puppets of God. They thought they were mocking him, but God was giving believers an insight into what was really happening, for he was the King of the Jews. He was crowned.

And the fact that they planted a crown of thorns to put on his head is most significant. Why should they take a crown of thorns? Well, of course, as far as they were concerned, it was just something that would hurt, something that would be an insult, something that would make him an object of scorn. But if you’ll remember, thorns were

the sign of the curse. It is in Genesis chapter 3 that we read that one of the evidences of the curse of sin is that the creation shall bring forth thorns and thistles. And so the thorns and thistles which were crammed upon Jesus’ head was God’s way, of saying to all who had spiritual discernment, that he is bearing the curse. And so as the curse is taken and placed upon his head, these little puppets of the Roman Empire and Emperor are playing the part of God in saying, as visibly as you could say, “The curse for man’s sin is taken by this one who is the King of the Jews.” As you know, they led him out to Mount Golgotha and there they ripped his clothes from him in fulfillment of prophecy. But more than that, what was nakedness? Well nakedness was the shame of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, they discovered that they were naked. It was the result of sin. And our Lord not only bore sin, but he bore all of the results of sin too, its reproach. And so he died naked as if to give a message to all that Jesus is bearing the reproach of sin.

And isn’t it striking that they share his garments. And on one side, we have the soldiers shooting dice for the clothing of Jesus. And one puts on the cloak that is won as a result of what happens on Golgotha. And if you have any spiritual discernment, you can see immediately what this is designed to represent. It’s the fact that by reason of his death and his death for our sin and the reproach of our sin, the shame of it, men are covered, clothed in righteousness. We talked about this when he talked about Isaiah chapter 61 and verse 10. It was God’s way of saying to us, “The suffering of Christ is the basis for the covering of righteousness.”

Schilder says, “God could put clothing upon the first Adam, only because he would one day, take it off of the second Adam.” And with that statement I agree with one exception; Jesus was not the second Adam, he was the last Adam. For had this Adam failed, there would have been no other. There are only two representative men.

Now, the cry of course, that Jesus uttered, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That cry is the epiphany of what it means to be lost. If you want to know what it means to be lost, just reflect upon the fact that Jesus said, “My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Separation from God and separation forever is eternal punishment. And that is what our Lord bore. I do not think it is wise for us to stress the physical sufferings of our Lord. It tends to mislead people. It’s true, Jesus bore great physical suffering, but his physical suffering is not the point of Calvary. The point of Calvary is his spiritual suffering. That’s what makes his death different from any other death that was ever died. When Jesus said, “I thirst,” he was not suffering because he needed a drink of water. That was only the outward expression of the fires of divine judgment which were searching his soul. Very striking that right after he says, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” that he says, “I thirst.” Because there was the expression in his body of what was going on within. I’m not making this up. The Bible says this and human experience says it too.

In Proverbs chapter 17 in verse 22 we read, “A broken spirit drieth the bones.” And remember when David committed his great sin, when he was guilty of adultery. What did he say? He said, “My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” For the judgment of God was upon him. For days and weeks and months, that’s how he felt. That’s how he describes his time out of fellowship with God. And the man who is sensitive to fellowship with God, when he’s out of fellowship with God, will know precisely what David means, “My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” A man out of fellowship with God is an unhappy man. Our churches are full of them. You can look down the pews of many of our churches and pick them out. They’re out of fellowship with God. They’re sour. There’s no life. They have believed in God, so they say, but there is no life. There is no vitality. There is no real response to the things of the Lord. They are dead and lifeless and inside their “moisture has been turned into the drought of summer.”

Listen, my dear Christian friend, it is a serious thing to be out of fellowship with God. We were discussing this in the elders the other night. You know, you can even tell in a meeting, when there are men out of fellowship with God. There’s a pall that falls

over the meeting of the saints. It’s that effective. It’s that easily seen. It was seen in the Old Testament when Akin sinned. You tell in Israel when a man sinned. It’s a serious thing. Sometimes when I’m out of fellowship with the Lord, can you tell it?

Now, the conclusion of the Passion. Why, I should have said this, but since we’ve already talked about Matthew chapter 27, verse 46 so much, I guess I assumed that you should understand that that cry is an expression of the substitutionary character of our Lord’s sufferings. Would a good God forsake the only good man who ever lived? Does a loving God injure the only innocent man who ever lived? The only explanation of the events of the cross is that our Lord was innocent, that he was the only good man, that he was not dying for his sins, but he was dying for the sins of others. Otherwise, do not speak to me about a good God. Do not speak to me about a loving God. There is no loving God if Jesus did not die for others.

The explanation of Matthew 27:46 is Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21. “He hath made him to be sin for us. Him who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Made sin for us. And the soldiers clothed that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Now, it is evident, if this is the suffering that is atoning, if this is the suffering that removes our sins, these sufferings are non-atoning sufferings. I’m using the term “atoning” theologically, not biblically, remember atoning.

Now, the conclusion of the passion is the burial account, and our time is I will try to stop at eight. We have five minutes and I want to say one word about the last here. The burial account is actually the conclusion of our Lord’s sufferings, Jesus’ active sufferings. Now, you are theologians. You must learn to distinguish between his active sufferings and his passive sufferings. Jesus’ active sufferings were over when he said, “It is finished” and gave up the ghost. His active sufferings were over. His spirit went to the Father. But his passive sufferings were not over, the humiliation of burial.

Why do we bury bodies? Well, we bury bodies because they decay and corrupt. It is our way of saying that we do not wish them in our presence. Jesus was buried, and that was the last stage of his humiliation. The burial has to do with his humiliation. You can see that because of the objective parts of our Lord’s death or his work. Remember, he died, he was buried, he was raised again. Those are the objective facts. Now, in the Pauline epistles, in the subjective appropriation of these, the death is related to the “old man.” The burial is related to the “old man.”

The resurrection is related to the “new man.” We have been buried with him in baptism into death, but we have been raised together with him to life. The burial belongs to the humiliation side of our Lord’s experience, and so his burial is the completion of his passive sufferings. But there is the great transition in his activity because he was buried in a new tomb, wherein, no one else had ever been laid. And remember, it was the custom of the Jews to accord men honor by burying them or doing something “new” for them, and it was God’s way of saying, “That’s all that man is going to do to Jesus.” But, you know, there is no greater contrast between our Lord as the Son of God and as man than when they placed the body in the sepulcher. There is a man whose eyes are closed, whose mouth is shut, whose ears are deaf, whose legs and limbs are without life. That is the low point of the humiliation of the son of Man. And, yet, at that very moment, he, the essential person, is the Son of God. Tremendous climax. There is a great story there.

But now, I want to say just a few words about “Christ’s Sufferings and Resurrection, or His Sufferings after Death” and let’s turn over to Colossians 1:24 and let me read this text for our last one. Colossians chapter 1 in verse 24. Paul writes,

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”

What Paul says is that he is filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of the Messiah. How is it possible for us to say that there is anything lacking in the sufferings of Christ? He who said, “It is finished.” How could we say, “Now I fill up that which is lacking”? That’s what the Greek text says here, which I have before me. “I fill up the things that are lacking of the afflictions of the Messiah in my flesh.” How could the afflictions of Christ, how could his sufferings be lacking if he said, “It is finished”? Well, of course, the answer to it is that, his atoning sufferings were finished, but his non-atoning sufferings were not.

And so here we have, again, non-atoning sufferings. And by the way, the word that is used here translated “afflictions” is the Greek word *thlipsis*. That word is never used of the atoning sufferings of our Lord. It’s the word that’s used of the great tribulation, by the way. Here it’s used in the plural, the tribulations of Christ. This is a word that could be used to describe these sufferings. They are afflictions. The word that is used to describe our Lord’s sufferings in atonement is a different word. So these are non-atoning sufferings that arise out of his identification with us.

Do you remember what happened when Paul was converted? He said, “Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?” But Paul had not persecuted our Lord. How could Jesus say, “Paul, Paul, why persecuteth thou me?” Well, he can only say that because the saints are identified with Jesus Christ. And when you touch a saint, you touch the Lord because the body of Christ belongs to him now. He’s the head. We are the members. And if you have believed in Christ, Tom, and I were to touch you, I would be touching our Lord. That kind of suffering, that kind of affliction, Jesus still suffers. They are sufferings that arise out of his identification with us. They are non-atoning. Time’s up. We must stop. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege and opportunity of the study of the word of God. We thank Thee for this great and solemn subject. And we pray that our

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appreciation for our Lord may grow as our days go on when we think about what he has done for us.

This we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.