



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 13: 24-30 & 36-43

Divine Purpose in History and Prophecy, part XIII

Eschatology Doctrinal Studies “The Course of this Age” TRANSCRIPT

Well, I think, it is 7:30, so let's begin our class by looking to the Lord in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the Word of God, and we thank Thee for the way in which it is ministered to us. We thank Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the principle subject of the word of God; the mediator between us and Thee, and the one who has brought us into fellowship with Thee by virtue of his sacrifice. We thank Thee for his continuing ministry to us as our Great High Priest who continues to pray for us, and continues to teach us through the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for him, for our great triune God.

We are so grateful Lord, and we worship Thee and praise Thy name tonight; desire in our study to glorify our Lord and to deal with the things which Thou hast made available for us through Jesus Christ. For everyone present in this auditorium and upon their families, and we ask Lord for each of us that, we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord that our lives may be more pleasing to Thee and we may day by day and hour by hour and moment by moment, enjoy the fellowship that we have with

Thee by virtue of our Lord and the Holy Spirit given to us to make that a reality in our lives.

We pray for the children of those who are here and ask Thy blessing upon them, each one of them, and we especially pray for those who have physical disabilities or particular problems and difficulties that they find it very difficult to concentrate on the things that have to do with the Lord God of heaven. Undertake for them. Meet their needs. Give them healing in accordance with Thy will. And, Lord, now we pray Thy blessing upon us as we study together.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now, we are studying, as most of you know, the “Divine Purpose in History and Prophecy,” and we have begun with the Creation, and we have come through a great bit of the teaching of the Bible, in the sense in which we have concentrated on the major events of the word of God. And tonight I'd like to give the next in the series as a message on “The Course of the Present Age.”

Now, we have known, if we have followed our thinking through to this point that something different happened on the Day of Pentecost. A new face was given to the people of God, and the ministry that the epistles have set forth for us, is a ministry that is particularly directed to us at the present time, but tonight I'd like to just deal with that subject, “The Course of the Present Age” because I think it's fitting right at this point and I think it would be most useful for us to turn to Matthew chapter 13, and we'll look at the parable of the tares among the wheat, which is devoted really to the course of this present age. And we'll read the two sections; first, in which our Lord gives the parable, and then the passage in which he gives the interpretation of it. So first of all, we're reading Matthew chapter 24, verse 24 through verse 30, and the evangelist writes.

“Another parable he put forth to them saying; the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. And while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. When the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy hath done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares, you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares, and bind them in bundles and burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Now, you can just imagine how the apostles would love to have had an interpretation of it, and that’s precisely what they get a moment later, where we read in verse 36.

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house: and his disciples came to him saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world; the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of this age.’”

Now, you can see from this that this parable takes us through the course of this age, beginning with the spreading of the word in the sowing of the seed, and now our Lord has reached the place of the end of the age. Verse 41.

“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire: there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Well, the evangelist takes a new departure in Matthew chapter 13. You know from your reading of this gospel that this is something that is different that begins in chapter 13 and verse 1. In fact, we are told that our Lord speaks in mysteries. For example, in verse 10 we read, “The disciples came and said to him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.’” So he will speak in mysteries, and he speaks in parables.

Now, the parable is a simple device by which, it actually means “to cast by the side of” and so what one does is to have in mind the reality, the spiritual reality, and then lay it down, so to speak, by some particular, what shall I say, story or some particular experience with which we are acquainted, and then to compare that with which we are acquainted with the spiritual truth, and vice versa. So our Lord speaks in parables. The seven or eight of Matthew chapter 13 are things that have to do with the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens.

Now, the leading thoughts that appear include these; first of all, there is a new content in the kingdom teaching. You’ll remember that the Old Testament doctrine of the kingdom of God begins in Genesis chapter 1 in verse 26 and verse 27, when the Lord God said to Adam and Eve that they were to have dominion in the earth. That’s the beginning of the kingdom of God. These individuals are the regents, so to speak, of the kingdom of God, and the story of the kingdom is developed through the Bible. And, finally, when our Lord Jesus comes, it’s John the Baptist who remember, you remember,

gave the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.” Twice he did that chapter 3 in verse 2, and chapter 4 in verse 17.

Now, the teaching that is given in this particular section, is that which has not been given up to this point, because he says in verse 16 and 17, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For assuredly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” He had said previously, “Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they do not see; hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand.” Our Lord said he spoke in parables to unfold things, but he also spoke in parables to conceal things from those who were unresponsive to the ministry that he had been given. So new content concerning the kingdom of God is to be given in the parables of Matthew chapter 13, and after you read and study them, I’m sure you would concur with that.

But the thing that stands out particularly, is not so much the difference in the kingdom itself, as the fact that now we have some particular indication of the time in which this kingdom is to be realized in the experience of the believers. In verse 30 we read, “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers; ‘First, gather together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” And then also in verse 43, “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. he who has ears, let him hear.” So we learn from this that one of the important things is the definition of the time when the kingdom is to come and our Lord talks about it there with the events that just precede it.

But there is another thought that is important, and that is the fact that this indicates that the period between the first coming of our Lord and the second coming of our Lord is an interregnum. That is, it’s a period of time in which the king or the ruler is not serving upon the earth. We call it “interregnum,” the period of time between, for example, the death of the king and the coronation of a new king. Well, this period of

time from between the two comings of our Lord, is an interregnum, and we learn that from this particular chapter, as well as from other places in the word of God.

Now, there are some very interesting truths that appear here and emerge as our Lord gives forth these parables. First of all, something rather startling, it must have been, was that there's a concurrent sowing by the evil one, along with the sowing of the son of man. Verse 39, “The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.” In other words, the son of man sows, but so does the devil or so does Satan.

Now that, of course, is a striking thing and surely must have been one that startled the apostles. This interregnum also we learn is not a brief one. Now, we have suggestions about that, and of course, you and I who live in nineteen hundred and ninety-two, at least most of us are living in nineteen ninety-two, we know, of course, that this interregnum has been in existence for a long time, but there was some indication of it in the fact that the seed was sown, and then reference was made to the fact, that they were not to root up the tares, but wait until they came to maturity. So in that, there was a suggestion in this particular parable of a lengthy period of time in which the mysteries of the kingdom and the truth concerning it would be in effect.

And then there's another point that is important. Not only the concurrent sowing by the evil one with our Lord, the son of man; not only that the interregnum is not a brief interregnum, experience has taught us that, as well as the suggestions of the word of God have confirmed it, but this age climaxes in a separating judgment, verse 41 through verse 43.

“The son of man will send out his angels. They will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness. And will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will

shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He, who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

And, of course, we learn from this that there is such a thing as judgment to come. We live in a day in which that is very unpopular in our theological schools, and even in the schools that have been what we would call conservative Bible believing schools, they're not anxious today to preach on the judgment of God. And the doctrine of eternal punishment, for example, is very unpopular and many of the evangelicals whose books you read are individuals who now deny the historic doctrine of eternal punishment.

I think, in one of the messages I made reference to something that H. A. Ironside said many years ago. He was talking about 2 Corinthians chapter 5:11, in which the apostle says, “Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord.” And to illustrate the point, he reminded his readers of his book, that back in the 1870's Theodore Parker, who was a very prominent preacher in Great Britain, preached a sermon that was widely spread about and published entitled, “There is Nothing in God to Fear.” And that false note that he struck went all over the land, and more or less had its influence upon thousands of preachers in Great Britain,” so Dr. Ironside said. But when we turn to the word of God, we know as we read the word of God that there is something in God to fear. There is a judgment that is to come.

We read of this in the words of our Lord here. These individuals have forgotten what the Bible says. Just to take one text; it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but when we substitute a gospel, “arose where the Gospel” it used to be called, of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man instead of the stern reality set forth in the doctrine of the judgment or eternal judgment of God, it's not surprising that people pay very little attention to the word of God. There is something in God to fear. And as I mentioned, I think, last time when we talk about the brotherhood of man, let's remember that what we are talking about is the brotherhood of lost souls who need

eternal salvation. “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord.” Our Lord certainly makes that point here when he talks about the judgment, the furnace of fire, the wailing, the gnashing of the teeth that will climax the age.

Now, I would like to turn to the parable in verse 24 through verse 30, and give a brief exposition of it, and then we’ll turn to the explanation of the parable. And I’ll conclude with several points that I think should be made and make some applications to some of the things that are happening in Christianity today. So let’s turn to verse 24 through verse 30, where the parable is set forth by our Lord. Verse 24, “Another parable he put forth to them saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.” Now, you’ll notice that this follows the parable of the soils, with which he began chapter 13, the parable of the sower who went out to sow, and who sowed his seed, and the different types of response were related to the different types of ground. But in this particular parable, the fortunes of the good seed only that the son of man sows are in view. So he only talks about the good seed, and he says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.” These parables are something like candid camera shots, and this is a kind of candid camera shot that we are to follow with our Lord. What we have here, are not definitions of the kingdom when he says, “The kingdom of heaven is like,” but simply, certain aspects of the kingdom because there are other aspects of the kingdom that are unfolded, not only in this chapter, but in other chapters of the word of God. Then verse 25, the satanic activity is referred to. “And or but while men slept.”

Now, that’s more than very interesting because that happens to be the title of a book that John F. Kennedy wrote. Some of you may remember, well, there are not enough of you around in this audience that are old enough to remember. But your parents would have remembered that President Kennedy, one of the first things that he did in public life, was to write a little book which he called, because he was a great follower of the Bible you know, *While Men Slept*. That was the title. It’s a great title

because what he was trying to show was that one of the great mistakes that we make as a nation or as individuals for that matter is to fall asleep and things happen which later on embarrass us very much. And he, of course, had in mind the fact that between World War 1 and World War 2, so many of the nations of the west fell asleep. And while they slept, Hitler and others arose, and then many lost their lives because men slept, instead of providing us with a satisfactory defense.

So here we read, “While men slept.” And you’ll notice too, it’s nighttime. “While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” The wickedness, well, let me say a word about tares first. “Tares” is a reference to a common vetch which has a resemblance to wheat. In fact, the Greek word is a term that refers to the “bearded darnel” or “darnel,” and it’s indistinguishable from the wheat in its early stages. And in addition, and this is very important I think, it also is a grain that breeds poisonous fungus, very fitting for those who are sons of the evil one. So it’s not only like the darnel, but it also is poisonous, and the striking thing about it is, of course, it’s so much like wheat that only an expert can tell the difference at the early stages. In fact, generally speaking, so I am told, when they do try to separate it early, and the grains are taken, they’re all put on a table, and the darnel is singled out seed by seed by the fact that it has, at a certain stage, a slight gray look to it. So our Lord has picked something that is very, very significant.

And verse 19 we read, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who receives seed by the wayside.” This is then, not the first time that our Lord has mentioned the significance of Satan; the satanic activity. Now, the solution to the problem is described in verse 26 through verse 30.

“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him. ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’”

That’s a most interesting statement. You think about it for a moment, and you’ll see that what this statement touches on is the origin of evil. This is the son of man who is sowing seed. How is it possible for the son of man to sow seed and then have tares in the midst of it? So in the form of the illustration, probably the most fundamental problem of Christian theology is raised; the origin of sin. “So the servants said, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’” And he said to them, well, this is the explanation, “An enemy has done this.” The servants said to him, “Do you want us then to go and gather them up? But he said, “No, lest while you gather up the tares, you also uproot the wheat with it. Let both grow together until the harvest and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First, gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

It’s sort of a glimpse in that statement into the mysterious region, nonetheless reliable, because it’s so momentary that our Lord says, “An enemy has done this.” “The sulfurous clouds” someone has described it, “that hide the fire in the crater are blown away for an instant, and we see inside a crater.” Who would doubt the truth and worth of the unveiling, because it was short and partial? “An enemy has done this.” “The devil, I don’t know who first said this, the devil is God’s ape. His work is a parody of Christ’s. Where the good is sown, there the evil is scattered thickest. False Christ’s, false apostles, dog the true like their shadows. Every truth has its counterfeit.” When we have a man stand in a pulpit and preach the word of God, you can be sure that as the wheat of God is proclaimed, there are tares also that are growing, and problems arise. And the apostle’s message to the church at Ephesus underlines it because he said remember, “Of your own selves, there will be individuals who will arise and seek to overthrow the teaching of the

apostles.” So very interesting, this thing, it raises the question of the origin of evil, and so far as this particular passage is concerned, we don’t have a whole lot of light, other than the fact that it is traceable to satanic activity.

Now, he said, “Gather the tares, bind them in bundles and burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” I think of that story of the preacher who was preaching and said, “There will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth among the wicked who pass on to the next world.” A member of the congregation spoke out and said, “What about those who haven’t any teeth?” And the preacher was quick. He said, “Teeth will be provided.” So here we have then, the harvest and the burning of the tares that had been gathered into bundles, and those that are the Lord’s are gathered into the sower’s barn.

Now, in verse 36 we have the explanation of the parable of the soils. I know you might not think it necessary to have an explanation, because I’ve already given you some explanation, but I won’t say I guarantee, I’m sure that it’s important that we read our Lord’s explanation, because it’s the inspired one. Now, we read in verse 36, “Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house.” Now, that’s an interesting thing because verse 1 of chapter 13 began with, “On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea, and great multitudes were gathered together to him” and he gave those opening parables. But now we read, “He went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” Would it be possible, perhaps, that the opening part of the series of parables is designed primarily for all individuals, those that were gathered around, but the interpretations now, are given specifically to the apostles, or disciples? Perhaps it means this; that now we are introduced to the internal facts of the kingdom, whereas, we have already had some of the external facts of the kingdom.

At any rate, now we have, “He went into the house.” His disciples asked him to explain the parable, and so he does. We read in verse 37, “He who sows the good seed is the son of man.” So the sower is the son of man. The son of man is also, of course,

the lord of the angels because in verse 41 we read, “The son of man will send out his angels.” So we are to think of someone who has authority over the angels. We are to think of our Lord, of course, and all of us in this auditorium, I presume, we don’t have any questions about the deity of Christ. Later on, I’m going to say something about that. We know the “son of man” as a title for our Lord in his sovereign authority, and one sees that since he commands the angels to do his will.

So we read then that he’s the sower and the sower is the son of man, and the son of man is the one with sovereign authority with reference to the kingdom. The field. “The field,” he says in verse 38, “is the world.” Now, if it’s the Lord of the angels, it’s his world, isn’t it? So the field is his world. I have always had a little bit of a problem with missionaries who talk to us about a “foreign field.” Now I know why they do, and I know often, there’s nothing really bad about it at all, because they’ve been taught to use those terms. But if we look at the Bible, the field is the whole world. As far as foreign and home missionary work is concerned, it’s all “foreign” for a believer. His citizenship is in heaven we are told, so everything is foreign. When we say “foreign missionary” or “home missionary,” they’re really just talking about parts of that which is foreign missionary work.

Now, I don’t want to make too much over that. That’s not too important. The field is the world. That is, that to which we are all sent. We are sent to the whole world, not simply to Dallas or North Dallas. We are sent to Texas, the United States of America, and all the nations of the earth as representatives of our Lord. And we can, if we take it upon our hearts to be helpful to those who are in the four corners of the earth preaching the word of God. I hope you do that. I hope you do try to help those who have a very difficult time when they go out to the foreign fields, and do not have the financial support and the psychological support of the Christians that they had when they’re in this country. The field is the world. Now notice he says, “The field is the world” not the church,

because the kingdom here is broader than the church. The church is in the kingdom, but the kingdom is broader than the church.

Then he talks about the seed. Verse 38. He says, “The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom.” They are the genuine believers in our Lord Jesus Christ that come to faith in him. Then we read of the tares. “But the tares are the sons of the wicked one.” Side by side with the Lord’s deposition or depositing of holy truth, and the work of regeneration in the hearts of men, there goes on the work of Satan in also spreading his message; his principles. So the Lord deposits holy truth in the field. Satan deposits his evil principles. They both are going along at the same time, so he says. His personal antagonist always works. He’s always busy. The devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And so here we have the devil working, and our Lord is working.

Then the enemy. We read in verse 39, “The enemy who sowed them is the devil.” We’ve already talked about that. You’ll notice, incidentally, from this, that the devil is a person, and not only that, but he has hostility toward our Lord. Remember those words in John chapter 8 in verse 44 in which the Lord Jesus said to some of those who were not responsive to his ministry, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. You are of your father the devil.” Those were some of the seed that the devil has sown. We have lots of seed that the devil has sown also. They are spiritual tares that are in the midst of the children of God.

He talks about the harvest next. He says, “The harvest,” verse 39, “is the end of the age.” Now, if you read the prophets, you’ll remember the expression “in the last days,” *ba’achariyth bayamiym*. In the end of the days. It’s almost as if this is the New Testament equivalent, “at the end of the age.” So the harvest takes place at the end of the age. The son of man, well, in verse 39, “The harvest is the end of the age.” Then we

have an interesting statement in verse 30, where he says, “The reapers are the angels.” Now later on, he will talk about the reapers, and how they will “take out of his kingdom, all things that offend,” verse 41. And then the final action in verse 40 through verse 43 is a reference to the harvest at the end of the age, and the climax of the casting into the furnace of fire, and the righteous shining forth as the sun in the kingdom.

Now, I want to turn to the points that I think this parable makes, with reference to the present age. These are some of the things that I think could be said about our day. First of all, in the kingdom of God, there is both reality and profession. We live in a society in the United States which is part of the world, and this parable is something that pertains to the world. It not something directed to the church. It’s directed to the world. The church is just part of the world. But there is both reality and profession in the kingdom of God. In verse 41 we read, “The son of man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.” So, evidently, before the harvest in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of the Son there are tares. There are those who have only the reality or the only the profession of faith and not the reality of it. In verse 30, we had the same sort of thing. “Let them both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers; ‘First, gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” So there are two different kinds of people that are in this society that we know as the world. There are the tares. There are the wheat. And the tares, it would appear, far outnumber the wheat.

Now, there are some difficult problems that arise here. There is, of course, the problem that I mentioned about the origin of moral evil. That’s a problem that’s puzzled the men ever since men began to talk about theological thing, and it’s the problem that puzzled the servants when they said, “Didn’t you sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” That’s the beginning of the problem, as far as the parable is

concerned, and that para – that particular problem is one of the most difficult in Christian theology. But that’s not all we have here.

The second thing that one would realize whose evident here, is the fact that there is the forbearance of God towards evil. In other words, all the time that the enemy is sowing his seed, his tares, God is forbearing to judge. In other words, we’ve had these hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, in fact, thousands of years for that matter in which the ultimate judgment has not taken place, and yet God, in his long suffering, allows the seeds to be sown that we call tares. That itself calls for explanation. That puzzled the servants, and that puzzles anyone who thinks about it. There are reasons why God tolerates evil, we think, but that is a problem that is raised here. The graces of the good exercised by the toleration of the wicked. The grace of God is exemplified in supporting the good amongst the evil. The wicked are tolerated, to render it possible for the grace of God to convert others, or to convert them for that matter, for all of us are born under sin. But anyway, those are some of the things that are raised here that are problems.

Now, I think that what our Lord is talking about is something very broad. He’s talking about the world. He’s talking about religious relationships. He’s talking about persecutions. He’s talking about things that are broader than the church of Jesus Christ. He’s talking about things like the Spanish Inquisition. He’s talking about the persecution of the great saints; the Tyndales, the Husses, the Lattimers, and the other things that transpire in general society, because society is opposed to those who stand for the truth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So that’s one thing.

Now, there is another thing that appears here, and that is that these two classes of individuals; that is, the wheat, the tares, the sons of the kingdom, the sons of the evil one; they are distinguishable by their conduct. That’s evident, because he says to the servants, “Now, don’t do anything about it at the present time. Wait until the time of the harvest, and then it will become evident who are the tares and who are the wheat.” The Lord

Jesus, of course, more than once makes the point, “By their fruits you shall know them.” And so we learn here as well, that a man’s actions, ultimately, will demonstrate exactly what he is. Chapter 7 in verse 16, our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?” And then in verse 19 or verse 20, “Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.” So even in this case, there, ultimately, is a manifestation, and the discrimination will show itself, finally, and the tares will be seen to be tares, the wheat will be seen to be wheat.

I’ve thought about that as I’ve been thinking about this message; how often it is in the Christian church. Individuals come into the building. They listen to the word of God. Often, they show, apparently, the kind of interest that one would think to be the result of regeneration, and then often, there comes a time when their interest begins to wane. The joy that they seemed to have is no longer evident, and then finally, they drift away. They begin to drift away, and then soon, they not only don’t attend this particular assembly, or the particular assembly that we may be thinking about, because true of all assemblies, churches they’re not attending anywhere in this city, all over this city. They’re individuals who at one time, attended a believing church and manifested interest, but now show no interest whatsoever. Let me give you one illustration. In Believers Chapel there was a lady who attended the Chapel, took a great deal of interest, and then after a time, the apparent joy that she seemed to have waned, and, finally, she was quoted by some of the friends who knew her better as saying near the end when she left everything, “I hate God.” Now, this was an individual that attended our meetings. So I hope there has been some change, but I remember I wrote that down, because it was so impressive to me, that a person who apparently was interested in the things of the Lord, could ultimately come to the place where they say, “I hate God.”

Now, of course, there is something here in the last part of each of these particular sections; both the giving of the parable, and the interpretation of it, that touches on eternal punishment. In verse 30 we read these words, “Let both grow together until the

harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers; ‘First, gather together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” Verse 40, “Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of the age.” And then verse 42, “And will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” That’s very important for you to notice this. Incidentally, we have evangelicals today who are denying eternal punishment, as you know. And what is significant about this is that, occasionally, they will use excuses such as, “Well, the fire is a figurative thing, and we’re not to think of it as what we would think of as fire.” Well, it may not be precisely what we think of as fire, but it will be something just as destructive. That’s very evident.

But I want you to notice that in the expounding of the parable, or the giving of the parable, the fire is mentioned, and then in the interpretation of the parable, the fire is also mentioned there. We have in verse 30, “First, gather together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” Now, that was the giving of the parable. But now in the interpretation of it, as our Lord explains the parable, he doesn’t give any explanation of the fire as if it is a mythical thing, or as if it’s only a figurative thing, but he again uses the same language. “Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of the age.” And verse 42, “And will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Now, we are talking about the course of this age. This, I think, gives us a general picture of the course of this age. It’s an age of seed sowing. It’s an age of the growth of the church; that is, the seeds that represent the sons of the kingdom. For nineteen hundred years now, we’ve had individuals who, through the preaching of the word of God, born again, brought into the church of Jesus Christ. We’re told here also, that the end of this age will be an age will be an out-breaking of apostasy and divine judgment upon them. So we have a picture then, of the preaching of the word of God. We have a picture of the growth of the church through the centuries, but we have a climax that is to

come, and it's to be a time of judgment. An important thing that I'm trying to stress here is that eternal punishment is in that.

Now, you've heard me mention Clark Pennick before. Clark Pennick is a very well known evangelical. In an issue of “Christianity Today” last month, there was a review of a recent book by Dr. Pennick. Dr. Pennick is a very, very unusual man. He began his Christian experience as a Baptist, I believe. Then in his theological perception, he became a dispensationalist, and he was a friend for awhile of Charles Ryrie of Dallas Theological Seminary. He was then in New Orleans at the Baptist seminary there. He left there, went up to Trinity Evangelic and Divinity School where I taught; taught there for a number of years, and now he is a professor in one of the leading universities of Canada. Well, what is interesting about him is that he has gone all the way from what he says was, “strong belief in the sovereignty of God and Calvinistic teaching,” to being one of the strongest and the most vocal Armenians in evangelicalism, but not only that, that wouldn't be altogether bad because Armenians who believe in Jesus Christ will be in heaven too. They'll be in Theology 101, but, nevertheless, they're going to be in heaven, and we're glad for that, because we have lots of things to learn ourselves.

Dr. Pennick's written another book, and it's called “A Wideness in God's Mercy - The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions.” He's a very sweet man in some ways, a very sentimental man in some ways, and a very caring kind of man in another ways, and he just cannot bring himself to believe that men are going to lost eternally. This book has a little different aim in it. What he's trying to show in this book is that the idea that the saved are a minority is not a biblical teaching. It is reviewed by Harold O. J. Brown of Trinity Evangelic and Divinity School, a friend of his who was on the faculty with him, the title of the review is, “How Crowded Will Hell Be?”

And Dr. Brown, who is a very, very thoughtful man, one of our leading evangelical men, Professor of Theology there said, some of the things that he says after he has praised Dr. Pennick for having concern, or humanitarian concern not to consign the

mass of humanity to perdition. He said, “But is it possible to preserve the saving message of the Gospel in the context of his moderating, ‘optimism of salvation.’” He goes on to point out that Dr. Pennick, nevertheless, sidesteps the question of truth in the main thesis of his book, when he doesn’t ask whether Augustine and the majority of tradition are in fact, right in affirming that few rather than many will be saved. He particularly lays stress on Matthew chapter 7, verse 13 and verse 14, and I think I’ll just read these verses for you.

We read here, “Remember,’ the Lord Jesus said, ‘Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it.’” These are the words of our Lord. These are the things that he himself has said, and Dr. Brown’s pointed out that Dr. Pennick has not exegeted those passages. He says as he agrees with someone else who has said, “The words of Jesus in Matthew 7: 13 and 14 could scarcely be clearer. The way to salvation is narrow. The road is difficult, and few, not many, successfully follow that road.” And what Dr. Brown finally says is that, “His book is an exercise in wishful thinking.” Well, that’s an evidence of some of the things that are happening as the course of the age winds down. I do not say that Dr. Pennick is not a Christian. I do think that he’s wrong in what he is seeking to show there.

We have also today with us, other evidences of the characteristic of our age; abortion. I guess most of you heard the debate recently between Senator Gore and Vice President Quayle. And one of the things that Senator Gore sought to do, to get over his point that he believed in “right to choice,” was he said, “Dan, I would like for you to complete the sentence. The woman has the right to choose.” And he made a very impressive emphasis upon it; said it more than once. “Complete the sentence. The woman has the right to choose.” Quayle didn’t attempt it. I don’t know whether he had an answer or not; whether he even thought it was frivolous. It wasn’t necessary. I’ve

been thinking about it. Now, what would I say, since I'm against abortion. I would say, “No one has the right to choose to cheapen life, especially an environmentalist.” Does a woman have the right to choose? No one has the right to choose to cheapen life, or no one has the right to choose to destroy human life. No one has the right to choose evil, or the strangling of a healthy beating heart, or no one has the right to choose to stop a healthy beating heart.

Abraham Lincoln in his debate with Douglas said, “No man has the right to choose evil.” The question is, is abortion an evil? That's really the question. But what we are seeing today, and I don't like to talk politics, and I hope you won't think that I'm trying to tell you to vote for Bush. I wouldn't tell you to do that. You have to make up your own mind, and if you vote for Clinton, you'll be my friend if you're a Christian, just as if you voted for Bush. That's all I'm going to say. Abortion is something a little different, however, but it does, I think, give further indication of the course of the age of which we are a part, and there is not a doubt in my mind, but apostasy, departure from the word of God, departure from truth is pervading our society, all parts of it, political, social, et cetera, pervaded by a failure to give adherence and obedience, faithful obedience, to God's inspired word; both Republicans and Democrats, no question about it in my mind.

We have even other things that are happening. Now we have in our theological seminaries individuals who are denying the deity of Christ. You know, of course, that Christianity is characterized by an “uncomfortable only,” as it's called in theological circles. An “uncomfortable only.” Do you know what that is? “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” The “uncomfortable only.” And our theological professors do not like to stand in the pulpit like this and say to people, “There is only one way to salvation. It's through Jesus Christ.” The objections, the criticisms, the things that are poured out upon an individual who stands for the “uncomfortable only” have caused many of our profession Christians to avoid it and to try to find ways in which they can avoid their “uncomfortable only.” Paul Nitter, John Hick. And the ways in

which they do it include such things as saying, “The incarnation of the Son of God is a myth.” No other religion, you see, has an incarnation of the Son of God but Christianity.

If we can destroy the incarnation then, of course, we destroy Christianity, and so we just call it a myth. In a sense, we’ve destroyed the fundamental difference between Christianity and all of the other religions on the face of this earth. What we have in Christianity, is an incarnation of the Son of God. God has come into our midst. John Hick regards Jesus as a soul liberated from selfhood, and fully open to the divine spirit. He’s Holy God, but not the whole of God. Only a theologian philosopher could make that distinction. Nitter says, “The New Testament has not one, but many christologies, and that there is no final and normative Jesus Christ that preserves both the content and intent of the abundant claims of the New Testament.” So the Lord Jesus is, of course, Holy God, but there are others who are Holy God too. What we have is pluralism that has invaded the Christian ranks. He concludes with, “In boldly proclaiming that God has indeed been defined in Jesus, Christians will also humbly admit that God has not been confined to Jesus.” Jesus himself did not do that. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Among the Lutherans, the same thing is happening. Saint Olaf College, one of their fine colleges, recently, earlier part of this year; a gathering of the Lutherans discussing some of the theological things that are characterize our age, and Carl Brotten has to stand up and say, that the Lutheran Church, ELCA, is involved in heresy at the present time. In response, incidentally, there was a doctoral student who made the claim that Dr. Brotten, in saying that Christianity stands or falls on the doctrine of the Trinity, was wrong. This doctoral student, in one of their schools, of course, is the product of the things that is being taught there.

Well, I want to close. I close with a deepened sense of the inevitability of divine judgment. We are sons of the kingdom, or not. We are wheat, or we are darnel. What

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are we? And I close also with a deepened sense of the almighty grace of the Father and the Son who planted the seed, and made it grow in my heart. I am so thankful.

And not only that, I know that I have security. I love that expression, “Gather the wheat into my barn.” That’s what we look forward to. “Gather the wheat into my barn.” I have security. I will enjoy a distinctive place. I will be in the kingdom, we read, of their father. Now we are the sons of God, the Apostle John will later say. Then the grandeur of the sonship appears...

[TAPE ENDS]