



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“Between the Kingdom and the Great White Throne”

TRANSCRIPT

We are turning to the subject of “Between the Kingdom and the Great White Throne.” We have been studying for a number of months now, the doctrine of eschatology or the teaching of the Scriptures on the last things, or simply, and popularly, prophecy. And we have concluded in our last study, our study of the kingdom of God upon the earth, that kingdom in which the Lord Jesus rules and reigns personally, and which is the consummation of many of the Old Testament promises, specifically the consummation of the Abrahamic Covenant promises, and the Davidic Covenant promises, and the New Covenant covenantal promises.

So now we want to turn to consider what happens after the kingdom of God upon the earth. And among the things that are going to happen are such things as this last rebellion about which we shall read in just a moment. The judgment of the Great White Throne, which we shall study next week, the Lord willing, and then the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth which will conclude our study of the prophetic word.

So let’s turn to Revelation chapter 20 and our Scripture reading is verses 7 through 10 of chapter 20, and we begin with verse 7:

“And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city -- The beloved city, of course, is Jerusalem -- and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. -- The last rebellion or between the kingdom and the Great White Throne.”

The loss of the sense of sin is a much greater evil than Nazism or communism or any other of the great “isms” which many people think are the greatest ills and evils that face us in the world. For all of these things, Nazism, any kind of totalitarianism, communism, are the fruits of sin itself. And if they are the fruits of sin, then surely the disease itself is far more important than its fruits. The absence of the sense of guilt that exists so universally among the nations and among individuals is the certain road to damnation. Someone has written, “Man without guilt would be neither man nor ape; he would be an inconceivable monstrosity.” That is the tendency today. We’ve already seen the first fruits in the Hitler youth and their hellish excesses in Poland which shocked the older men of the German armies, even. The loss of a sense of sin is a much greater evil than Nazism, which is merely one of its early fruits.

One of the stock arguments that the world gives against the sense of sin being a useful and profitable thing, is that when it becomes intense, it frequently leads to morbidity. Perhaps that is true. Perhaps it is true that there are some people who come under the sense of sin so intensively that there comes to them a sense of morbidity. But actually a sense of morbidity is not nearly so bad as some of these people tend to make it out. The absence of a sense of guilt feeling is a much greater peril for a man and the

entire human adventure. "The morbidity," someone else has written, "which may develop from a sense of sin is a jovial sanity compared to the morbidity which most certainly does develop from the absence of it." So while it may be true that the sense of sin causes some of us to become very morbid and depressed, it would be far better to have that than to be without a sense of sin.

You'll often read in the intellectual journals -- and this filters down to us who are average men -- that Calvinism is an evil that is to be deplored for the simple reason that it, too, has been supposed to induce a sense of morbidity. But surely, Calvinism is much less of a peril to our civilization and our Western civilization than communism, and Nazism, and some of the other totalitarian sins and wickednesses and some that are not totalitarian but have afflicted our society in the past and in the present. It is not true that if we push guilt out of sight, it is out of mind. It usually returns in the form of some type of neurosis or hysteria.

I think one of the most interesting things that one learns in the study of Adolph Hitler, who probably has been so far the greatest monster of the 20th Century -- one of the things that appears from the study of Hitler's life is that this man, who seemed to have no sense of sin whatsoever, was afflicted with periodic nightmares. So that there is, in Hitler's history itself, a testimony to the fact that man, no matter how much he may try to put the sense of sin and the sense of guilt away from himself, he cannot ultimately escape it.

The Scriptures say that there is in the heart of all the wicked an unceasing restlessness. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked. And that is true. They may look very peaceful on the outside, but deep down within, in every human heart that does not know the peace that comes from justification through faith in Jesus Christ, there is this lack of peace and an eternal restlessness. Nothing, nothing can really allay that. There is no place that a man can hide from the wicked, from the sense of the loss of peace and the sense of restlessness that sin gives. That sense of guilt is universal, and it is also

individual in the heart of every individual. “The jauntiest and cockiest of our generations and individuals sense its damnically in-presence,” someone else has said. Whatever may be ghostly in the being and character of God, it will not be his holiness.

Now, I think it’s very interesting that even though we have had a kingdom of God upon the earth, and the Lord Jesus has ruled and reigned in person, we are told here in the Book of Revelation in the 20th chapter that at the conclusion of that period of time, there is still in the human body sufficient sin and rebellion against God to raise a rebellion against him after the personal reign of the Lord Jesus for one thousand years. We’ve said, in one of our preceding studies, that the Bible is the book of the coming one. That is, that the whole of the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. It is also the book of man’s condemnation. And from the beginning of it, Genesis chapter 3 to the end of it [sic, Revelation] chapter 20, we find this unfolding of the great purpose of God. One of the great purposes of God is to show us our sins.

Now, this of course is one of the means by which God brings to the individuals the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. It surely is true. I think we all would grant that we do not desire a Savior if we have not first come to a sense of sin. So it shouldn’t be surprising to us that one of the great purposes of the word of God is to show us our sin.

In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, man departed from the freedom and independence which God had given him in creation, and the result was that he came under the guilt of sin and under the corruption of sin. And that corruption of sin, we call original sin. Every one of us participates in it. All of you nice-looking people here are the inheritors of original sin. You know exactly what it is or you should know exactly what it is. It is the corruption that we inherit from Adam. And we not only inherit this corruption of original sin, but we also are guilty, as a result of it, and destined for condemnation were it not for the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

We talk a lot about democracy in the Western world. The word has come to be a very confused word, because our totalitarian nations love to speak of themselves as democracies or democratic societies, and the word doesn't mean exactly what it once did. But, nevertheless, I think it can be said that there is no such democracy as the democracy of original sin. It pertains to every one of us, but we all know about it. This is the last phase of the demonstration of sin in the heart of man.

You'll notice back in verse 3 of Revelation chapter 20, when Satan, after the last of the war, the battle of Armageddon, between the Messiah and the enemies of God, that Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up. A seal is set upon him that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled. And then I think one of the most interesting words in this entire 20th chapter is the little word "must" in the last clause. And after that, he *must* be loosed a little season. Now, why must he be loosed? Why does not the Scripture say, And after that he shall be loosed for a little season? What is there of logical necessity in the release of Satan? Now, he doesn't simply prophesy. I want you to notice this now. He doesn't simply prophesize that he will be released; he says he must be released. The word signifies the necessity of logic. What is there logically? Incidentally, I am arguing from the form of -- or the particular Greek word that is used. There are in the New Testament three types of word -- three words that are translated *must*. Now, this is the one that expresses logical necessity. What is there of logic in the release of Satan for a thousand years? Why *must* he be released? Not why *shall* he be released; why *must* he be released? Perhaps this goes back to the working of God's purpose through the ages. Let me, for example, review some of the ages of the word of God.

Now, we must remember that when we talk about the ages of the word of God, we're not always talking about something that can be proven such as certain of the doctrines of Scripture. I'm not at all sure that there are seven dispensations in the word of God. There may be eight. On the other hand, there may also be only five. But as we

look at the Scripture, there are certain movements in the unfolding of God’s purpose that suggest to us a number of ages. At least the Scriptures speak of them as ages.

Let’s just -- for the sake of discussion, let’s think of some of these periods of time, and let’s think of what God may be doing in them. Let’s think, first of all, of the age -- the so-called Age of Innocence. As you probably know, I would not think that that is the best term for that period of time before Adam sinned. Because as I tried to explain to you in the studies of anthropology, it’s my own personal feeling that Adam was created in holiness and not in innocence. The fact that he had a will necessitates that the will be set upon something. If a person has a will, the will is set upon something. And since of course, it was not set upon sin, it must have been set upon holiness. You cannot have a will that doesn’t will. If a will doesn’t will, it’s not a will. So the very fact that Adam did have a will means that it was set upon something, and I argued as we discussed the question, three or four years ago, that Adam’s will must have been set upon that which was good. So he was created in righteousness and holiness. He was created in the image of God. He was not created in innocence. Now, that’s a minor point and it doesn’t really affect a great deal of the doctrines of the word of God, but I have just simply argued that. But, nevertheless, we call, for the sake of a term, that period of time in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned, the Age of Innocence.

Now, after Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, it is conceivable that Adam might have said as an excuse to God, “Well, one of the reasons that we sinned was that we did not know the consequences of our sin.” And so they followed an age of conscience in which, evidently, Adam did have a conscience, but still during the age of conscience and at the conclusion of it, Adam sinned.

Now, after that time, those who were the ones who had offended God might well have said to God, at the conclusion of that age. And really the problem was that we had no authority. If we had had some human authority, then perhaps we would have been prevented from sinning by human authority, some government. And so the age of human

government followed. And those who had not had a human government as set forth in Genesis chapter 9, for example, did have that. But still, man failed and the flood and the destruction of the Tower of Babel followed.

Now, someone might have said as a result of that, Well, we had no divine principles. And then as a result of the working of God, they were given divine principles. As a matter of fact, they were given certain principles that pertained to the Abrahamic promises. And so, being put under divine principles, the same thing happened again, man fell.

Well, as a result of their fall -- I should have moved on, they were given the law, and the law was the divine principle that they were given. But the divine principles failed. And as a result of the unfolding of the Old Testament revelation, again, man followed in his same sinful practice. Perhaps after it became evident that Israel and all who are under law had failed, they might well have said, well, what we really need is some divine enablement. And so, the time of the church age comes to pass. And the Holy Spirit, who before has not indwelt every individual who has believed in Jesus Christ, now, as a result of the present age, indwells every single believer in the Lord Jesus. But still, even though we have divine enablement, that divine enablement is not appropriated by mankind as a whole. And even the saints, the divine enablement is not appropriated perfectly. And so this present age in which we are living, shall itself end in a general apostasy.

Well, someone might say after this age is over, the reason that this age ended in general apostasy is that we had satanic opposition. Surely, we had divine enablement, but we had satanic opposition and Satan's opposition is too much for us. And so the kingdom age follows. And during the time of the kingdom age, Satan is bound for one thousand years. There is no -- so far as we can tell, there is no satanic opposition during the time of the kingdom. And if the result of that is that when Satan is released from the

bottomless pit -- or from the abyss -- he is able to go out and raise a rebellion of individuals who are so many that they are described as the sand upon the seashore.

Now, what then is God demonstrating through all of these ages? Well, he is demonstrating the sinfulness of the human heart. He is demonstrating original sin. He is demonstrating condemnation. He is demonstrating the fact that it is impossible for a man in the flesh to please God. So I think that probably is the explanation of that statement, And after that, he must be loosed for a little season. There is a logical necessity for God to demonstrate that even though Satan is not here, still man is sinful and rebels against the revelation of God.

I have once before referred to an incident that happened in the life of Dr. Barnhouse. He preached on the subject of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And in the course of this exposition which he gave in his church in Philadelphia, he stressed that we are the objects of temptations of the flesh and also temptations from the world. And he went on to point out that our troubles do not come entirely from Satan. In fact, he stressed the fact that they came from these other sources. And when he finished the message and pronounced the benediction, he said he walked to the front of the church, and he was standing there and he heard two ladies going out discussing the message. And one of them said to the other, Well, what do you think of that message that Donald preached this morning? And the other one said it was a very disturbing sermon to me, because the devil has always been such a comfort to me. It seems to me that this expression, he must be loosed, is related to what God is doing then through the ages.

Well, let's look now at the passage and the details. And we'll notice, first of all, in our outline Roman I, the release of Satan. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. It's evident that the kingdom is not the full consummation of the purpose of God. So when we say that the kingdom is a consummation of God's intentions through the years, we must lay great stress upon the Messianic aspects of it, the mediatory aspects of the kingdom of God upon the earth. It is

not his ultimate purpose, but it’s one of his great purposes. And it has special reference to those promises that God made to Abraham.

But throughout the kingdom, it’s evident that sin is present. Now, back in Isaiah chapter 65 in verse 20 in a passage which has to do with the kingdom, we have reference to sin and death. And so we should not have been surprised to learn that while the kingdom is time of glorious manifestation of the greatness of God, and a time of great blessing upon the earth, it’s not the ultimate in God’s aims.

We read in Isaiah chapter 65 in verse 20, “There shall be no more in it an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

So you’ll notice that there is sin, there is death during the time of the kingdom. So the kingdom is not the ultimate purpose of God. Righteousness rules on the earth because the Son of God is here in person, but righteousness does not dwell on the earth permanently, as it will in the new heavens and the new earth. Both two aims are accomplished then through this second coming of Satan.

Notice it is the second coming of Satan, because Satan has already come into the earth during the time of the Great Tribulation, remember. From chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, he was cast out of heaven into the earth. That was his first coming. Now his second. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison and he shall go out to deceive the nations. What are the things that are accomplished by this second coming of Satan? Christ has his first and second coming, so does Satan.

First of all, it is a demonstration of Satan’s own incorrigibility. I put that in the outline as Capital A, “Demonstration of Satan’s Incorrigibility.” One thousand years in the abyss has not changed the nature of Satan. Isn’t it an interesting thing that in the Scriptures we read that Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, and they were put under probation? And Adam and Eve failed their probation. They sinned. Eve sinned first, and then Adam sinned. When Adam sinned, since he was the representative

head, the whole race was plunged into sin. By one man, sin entered into the world. By the way, it says “by one man.” So sin entered through the representative man. You can blame Adam, if you wish.

Now, here we have then the entrance of sin into the human race. Man failed his probation, but man has an opportunity, through the coming of the Redeemer, to be restored to the possession of life. In fact, to possess what perhaps, probably Adam would have obtained had he been obedient, eternal life. The angels also evidently were exposed to probation. Because, remember, there are fallen angels, and there are other angels who did not fall. The fallen angels failed their probation. We read in the Book of Jude concerning certain angels that they left -- they kept not their own habitation, but they left that habitation. They failed their probation. The other angels who did not are called in Scripture, the elect angels. So there is a kind of Calvinism among the angels, too.

The striking thing about these two elections and these two probations, and these two failures is the fact that so far as we can tell from the word of God, there is no way for the fallen angels to be recovered. They do not have an opportunity for redemption. Satan is one of the fallen angels. And after a thousand years in the abyss, he still is his same ol’ incorrigible self. Reminds me of a statement that Madalyn Murray O’Hair once made. She said that, “No matter what would happen, she would still be her same ol’ miserable, disagreeable self. I don’t think she meant that, but she was expressing a very significant truth as far as certain people are concerned.”

The first thing then that is demonstrated by Satan’s one thousand years in the abyss and his release and his raising of this rebellion is his own incorrigibility. Don’t ever feel sorry for Satan. Don’t ever have any sense of compassion in your heart for Satan in light of the revelation of the word of God.

The second thing that is demonstrated or the second thing that is suggested by this release of Satan is, it is, as I’ve been saying, a demonstration of human depravity. It has

been said, a leopard cannot change its spots, and human nature is still sinful human nature. And even though the Lord Jesus is here in person still, sin is present and sin is propagated.

I have a very interesting quotation from Dr. Alva McClain. And I’m going to take the liberty of reading this, if you don’t mind. It’s very instructive I think, and it has a great deal to say about some of the attitudes that exist in our society. He takes up some objections to the nature of the millennial reign and specifically the claim that the reign of our Lord upon the earth is a carnal reign. You often hear people who are biblical students and amillennial in their interpretation of prophecy say, “The idea of the kingdom of God upon the earth is a carnal thing.” And so consequently, we do not believe there is going to be a kingdom of God upon of earth. That’s carnal. We are looking for a spiritual kingdom, not a kingdom of God upon the earth.

Well, Dr. McClain takes up that. And he says they tell us Christ is supposed to reign spiritually over the devil, the flesh, and the world. To look upward to the kingdom would be hankering after carnal things, more money, less physical discomfort, and so forth, and not dealing with the social problems that exist now. There is a publication incidentally which I take, and I won’t name the name because it has a good name. But it has a number of people who write in it, who write this month after month. So I read it month after month, this same type of thing. And, specifically, premillennialist, that means the apostolic teaching -- premillennialists are specifically attacked constantly as being individuals who are interested in the future and not in the present, and what we ought to be interested in are the social and cultural and economic problems of our day.

Now, I think when you tally up the contributions that evangelicals have made to the social problems of our world, you will discover that they have done a whole lot more, a whole lot more in history and even in the present time than our liberal friends who talk so much about it.

But, nevertheless, this is what the Dr. McClain says. He says, “The prejudice against such divine help from above, strange to say, has been stubborn, unreasonable, and rather a little childish. Many years ago, I sat in a seminar which was discussing some of the problems of society. The professor in charge had said that if only two goals would be reached, the abolition of war and the attainment of social justice, the world would enjoy a virtual millennium. He was a bit surprised at my suggestion that these identical goals are named in biblical prophecy to be realized fully in the kingdom which is to be established supernaturally at the coming of Christ. And as you know, that is specifically what Scripture says in the Old Testament. But to take only one passage, Isaiah chapter 11, that is what is said there. That is, there will be an abolition of war. There will also be the institution of social justice and other benefits as well. But his rejoinder was that such a way of solving human problems would not be a good thing at all, that men should and must solve their own problems. When I asked whether he might not welcome a little supernatural help from above, he remained unshaken in his position.

“Of course, logically, if it is always best for us to solve our own problems, we should kill off all our geniuses, for these rare individuals have solved hundreds of problems completely beyond the ability of the vast majority of the human race. Now, the argument is strengthened by the fact that Christ is no alien to our race, but became true man by his virgin birth and still so remains. After all, Christ is a man, and if men should solve their problems, what’s wrong with Christ, the perfect man, solving our problems?” he’s arguing.

“But the rather petulant prejudice against supernatural help from above has no logic. It recalls the remark Dr. McClain says of Robert Louis Stevenson whom when he was told of the death of Matthew Arnold said, ‘That’s too bad. He won’t like God.’

“Or the propaganda advertisement appearing in a radical socialist publication, Wanted: a new social order, a new sense of economic justice, a new approach to the problem of war, and a new political system, no gods need apply, unquote.

“Or the erection of a placard by a certain French king which reads, ‘All miracles in this place are forbidden.’”

Dr. McClain goes on to say, “A measure of this secular foolishness seems to have rubbed off on our present-day theologians. They’re willing to let God work miracles in what they call the spiritual realm, but in other realms they have posted their no-miracle signs all over the place.

“So what the Scriptures say for us is simply this, these great goals, which are legitimate goals: social justice, the abolition of war, a happy and significant life for all citizens, these goals are legitimate goals, but the Scriptures affirm they can never be realized by human effort because of sin. You see, the one thing that unites us is the one thing that prevents us from ever being united while we’re here on the earth without our Lord Jesus Christ present. What is that one thing in which we are all united and which prevents us from being united? It’s our sin. That’s what it is. Every one of us is united in that. But being united in it, it manifests itself in an independence of God and also in an independence of one another. I do not speak about the church. I’m just talking about you as a citizen.”

Well, now, let’s look secondly at the rebellion of the nations, verses 8 and 9. Satan is loosed out of his prison, and then we read that he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.

I want you to turn with me back to Psalm 66 in verse 3. Psalm 66 in verse 3. This is a Psalm of the Messianic Kingdom. And in the 3rd verse we read -- well, I’ll read the first two verses while you’re finding the passage: “Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honor of his name: make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How awe inspiring art Thou in thy works! Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto thee?”

The striking thing about this particular verse is that that verb “submit themselves” in the Hebrew text means to “yield famed obedient.” Now, this passage, being a millennial passage, suggests that through the greatness of the power of God, and even

though it is manifested in the earth, the enemies of God yield him during the kingdom period only a feigned obedience.

Now, remember, since the kingdom began with all of the inhabitants [being] citizens of the kingdom, genuine believers, it's evident by the ongoing of human life and the birth of individuals that there has grown up in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus and in a generation a number of people -- in fact, thousands and thousands -- so many they're called as the sand of the sea. These individuals are in rebellion against God, though they are outwardly subject to the king because he rules in rigid righteousness.

And at the first manifestation of disobedience outwardly, he acts, so Isaiah 11 tells us. Therefore when Satan is released, he has a great number of individuals in the kingdom who yield feigned obedience to the king. So he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.

What do you think would be the method of deception that Satan would use? I've often wondered about that. By the way, there isn't anything in the Bible, so far as I know, that distinctly says what is the method. It's conceivable that he might use many different methods. Is it not conceivable perhaps that he might use the method of anti-Semitism? Well, after all, in the kingdom age, it is Israel the nation which is at the head of the nations that rules and reigns with our Lord, and it is the Gentiles who come up every year to render worship to their Messianic king, is it not conceivable perhaps that someone may stir up the Gentiles for rebellion against God by means of anti-Semitism? One commentator has suggested that perhaps the fuel that they will use will be Gentiles: " 'Are you poor-spirited enough to submit any longer to the Jews, that ill-fated, money-getting, abject race who your fathers despised and loathed? Whose are the great warriors of whom history speaks et cetera, et cetera?' extolling the great history of the Gentiles as a means of stirring up rebellion."

Well, we don't know, of course, how this rebellion is stirred up. It is a deceptive thing. It says, he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the

earth. I’m not surprised, however, that he’s able to do it, because as the generations of the kingdom unfold, we have individuals who are born, who are born as the children of believers who entered into the kingdom. That is not surprising at all to me that the children of believers don’t become believers. One of the saddest things among the saints is the fact that there are individuals who are in marvelous grace brought out the faith in Jesus Christ, and they are remarkably saved. And those individuals are so touched that their whole life is transformed by the gospel of Christ. And as long as they’re alive, there is that freshness and vitality of a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Today, I must say, I was really thrilled today. There was a knock on my door, and I opened it up and one of the men, who is rather high up in the administration of Dallas Seminary, said, I’ve got something I want to talk to you about. He handles the financial side of the seminary’s operation. He came in and sat down, and he was really just bubbling over. He said, I want to tell you something which I think will mean something to you. He said, “It was December the 31st and the seminary was still open. A man came in and said, Is it too late to give money to the seminary this year?” I’ve never known anybody at the seminary to say it’s too late [laughter]. I would imagine if that person had been on the seminary grounds, and it had been 12:59 at night, there would still have been plenty of time to give as far as the seminary is concerned. And this man, however, said, no, it’s not too late to give. And this man said to him -- I don’t know who this man is really.

He said, Well, I want to tell you that I go to Believers Chapel. And I have been so blessed by the ministry of the word of God through the teachers of the word of God that have come from Dallas Theological Seminary -- he was not talking just about me. I hope he heard me once or twice, but he was talking about the whole group. He said, I have been so blessed by the ministry of the word of God that I want to express that in a gift. And with that, he startled this man that handles the money by putting down on his desk a check that was an extremely large check. I won’t say how large it is. It’s possible that

that man is even here. As I say, I do not know him. Now, there was an evidence, and it was a thrill to me, too, because it was an evidence of the fact that when God works in the human heart, it's natural for the individual to want to give in gratitude and appreciation for what God has done. Now, that is the vitality of a freshness of faith in the Lord Jesus.

And what was so thrilling to me about that was that that gift came without any solicitation whatsoever. It was a voluntary expression, which it seems to me, is the way all giving ought to be, voluntary expression of the fact that he had been blessed through the word of God. I don't know. He may have even found his salvation through the preaching of the men to whom he was referring. But, nevertheless, there is a freshness and vitality that is a thrilling thing.

Now, as you know, while that may be true of father and mother when the children come along, often there is no freshness and no vitality. It is sad but true that many of us can be brought up in Christian homes in which there has been this miraculous thing called conversion. It has taken place. Lives have been radically transformed, and yet the children that come along don't have any sense of what it is really to be converted. Incidentally, mother and father, conversion is something that you cannot produce. It's good to let our children know that they're lost apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. It's great to remind them that they are under condemnation and in sin and that they need conversion. It is bad to force children to make decisions, very bad, because often you cause them to lose the joy of the spontaneous working of God the Holy Spirit.

I'm not surprised then that at the conclusion of the period of time in which the Lord Jesus is here on the earth there should be vast numbers who do not know the truth of regeneration. Regenerated parents are no guarantee of regenerated progeny. Ideal conditions do not produce and cannot create ideal beings.

If you think it's incredible that after a kingdom there could be raised a rebellion against the Lord Jesus, would you think of Pharaoh? Would you think that it would be possible for Pharaoh, after having been the recipient of ten miracles through Moses and

also having been the recipient of the judgment of God, should in spite of the clear manifestation of the finger of God should rouse his army and seek to destroy the Israelites? That’s how wicked the human heart is. Well, we must face them.

It says here in verse 8, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog. That’s a most interesting expression because, as you know, Gog and Magog is an expression that is used in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39. Gog is the great leader of that confederacy that is opposed to God described in Ezekiel 38. And Magog is the land. Many Bible teachers think that it is a reference to what is modern Russia, others are not so sure. That’s incidental at the present. Its evident here that Gog and Magog are not used in the same sense that they are in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39. These words seem to be used symbolically of the world forces that are arrayed against God, just as Gog of the land of Magog was in the time referred to in the Book of Ezekiel.

In other words, what we have here is not the same thing as that which we have in Ezekiel. We know that the Rabbis used the term “Gog” and “Magog” in a different way. They taught that God and Magog would assemble themselves and their forces against Jerusalem and would fall by the hand of Messiah. And Rabbinic tradition details a conversation between Gog and Magog and the Messiah. The Messiah asks why they have come. And they answer, “We have come against the Lord and against his Christ.” You’ll find that statement in Rabbinic literature. So when John brings Gog and Magog into the picture here, he’s going back and taking terms out of Ezekiel and using them symbolically. And Gog and Magog here then are used as symbols of large forces that are opposed to God. They are described here as having the number as the sand of the sea.

Incidentally, there are other differences between these accounts in Ezekiel, it is Gog of the land of Magog. Here it is God and Magog. There the reference is of a person. Here, of a group of people. There, Gog of the land of Magog is engaged in his rebellion before the kingdom of our Lord. And here, it is postmillennial, after the time of the

kingdom. There, there is a battle which is described and Gog is killed by the sword. Here, there is no battle described, they are slain by fire that comes down from heaven. So we have then a symbolic use of the term.

Now, we read that as a result of the work of deception, they are gathered together to battle and the number of them is as the sand of the sea. They come together in a kind of simulation of the Feast of Tabernacles. Their destruction is described in verse 9, “And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about and the beloved city and the fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” This is the fire of divine execution. And as a result of it, they are destroyed.

Then finally we read of the restraint of Satan in verse 10. And first of all notice the communion of Satan, “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone where the Beast and the False Prophet are.” And so in the Lake of Fire, there is the devil, there is the Beast, and there is the False Prophet. So there we have the communion of Satan: the infernal trinity finally united in the Lake of Fire.

By the way, this cast into the Lake of Fire is very interesting, too, because it is so fitting that the final resting place of the lost because described as a lake. You know why? Because there is this that characterizes a lake: there is no exit for a lake. That’s why we read of the Lake of Fire. Not a river, but a lake.

Now, notice the last part of the verse. Here where we have reference to the eternal security of Satan, “And shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.” This verse is an interesting verse. It’s a good verse for annihilationists, those who believe that instead of suffering throughout eternity, when we are cast into the Lake of Fire, we are simply annihilated. But notice, it’s been one thousand years since the Beast and the False Prophet were cast into the Lake of Fire, but our text of Scripture says where the Beast and the False Prophet are. And they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. So their torment is going on forever and ever. They are not annihilated.

Now, there are many other texts of course which state that when we are cast into the Lake of Fire as unbelievers -- I don't like to use that term *we*, and yet I don't want to use *you* [laughter] -- when individuals are cast into the Lake of Fire, when they are cast into the Lake of Fire, it is not that they are annihilated, they are consciously in torment forever and ever. And this text is one of the many supporting verses. And, furthermore, it is also a text for second-chancers, any who feel that there is a second opportunity for a person to respond to the gospel after they have left this habitation. The beast and the false prophet are there, and they are tormented day and night forever and ever. There is no such thing as a second chance. Do not ever be deceived concerning that. This is the day of salvation, and there is no other day of salvation.

Well let me conclude then, because our time is just about up. One might ask a question of Satan after this, Lucifer, thou son of the morning, was it really worth it? Was it worth the rebellion against God to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire? You who were the anointed cherub that covereth, but now you will be tormented forever and ever. You said I will be like the Most High, but your destiny is the Lake of Fire forever and ever. You said you would be like the most high and would sit upon his throne. But your kingdom, what is its realm? Why your kingdom is this lake of burning sulfur, and your subjects are these individuals, these unhappy individuals who are gnashing their teeth in the midst of their suffering, screaming and writhing in the flames of eternal judgment forever and ever. The thing that amazes me is that it is sin that has brought men to this destiny. And even though sin has brought men to this destiny, men still love this monstrous beast.

Now, I'm going to read something else, if you don't mind, as we close our study. This is, I think, one of the most terrible expressions of the evil of sin that I have ever read. It's a rather lengthy statement. I hope that you won't mind if I read it. But we have about three or four minutes until our time is up, and I think I can finish it. This is authored by a man whose name was William Elbert Munsey. This is what he says concerning sin:

“This monstrous beast is loved, fed, fostered, and worshiped throughout the world. Men are sinners. They sin willfully. They sin systematically. They sin professionally. They sin individually. They sin socially. They sin nationally, till every stream that flows is stained with human crimes. And every breeze that blows is corrupted with a moral miasma. And every arrow of light flung by the God of day from his golden quiver is blackened. Scarcely an angel dare touch this cursed earth in his flight from sphere to sphere without pollution.

“The judgments of the almighty from age to age and the machinery of the world’s civilization and full motion from Adam till now have not abolished sin out of any one country upon the face of the earth. Prayers, sermons, books, institutions, laws, penalties, governments, all combined, have not blotted out one vice from sin’s black calendar. The life, miracles, suffering, and crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and teachings of Christ; the examples, works, importunities, deaths, and trials of his followers; the confessions and warning of his millions who have died testifying to their everlasting condemnation, the strivings of the Holy Spirit, curses of the law, the promises of the gospel, the horrors of hell, and the beauties of heaven, all these have not driven sin out of one neighborhood in the world.

“Sin is an immense river running through secret channels from hell’s seething ocean till it broke out upon this world in the Garden of Eden. There at the foot of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is its source. A noisy spring bubbling with the escape of baneful gasses in which tenebrous depths a serpent lives. Even and more ever-enlarging this river flows all around the world, onward it sweeps. Upon its banks no flowers grow, no foliage waves, but perpetual desolation pitches its pavilions upon the sterile strand, relieved here and there by bald and scoriae rocks upon which weeping spirits sit and curse the day that they were born. In all the universe there is no river so wide, so deep and swift as this. Its floods are black. Its waves are towering. And it goes surging and roaring on to the bottomless lake. Everlasting lightnings penciling every

billowy crest with angry fire and hell’s terrific thunders bounding from bank to bank and bursting with awful crash and strewing dead ruin all around.”

I see I’m not going to have time to finish it, but Mr. Munsey goes on to talk about the fact in spite of this, “Young maidens run laughing to plunge into the stream, old men with hoary locks streaming in the wind leap into to the stream, and others do the same. Between every human being in this fearful river there is a bleeding body and bloody cross, angels posited on every height and hovering over every head and shouting, stop in the name of God pause but for a moment, but disregarding it, men still race for that river, plunge in it and die.”

And he goes on to say, “Rivers never run more truly to the ocean than the river of sin runs to hell. And there at last, if never before, sin will find the sinner out by the infliction of its ultimate penalty, eternal death. Two more dreadful words were never joined together *eternal death*. Each term renders inexpressibly awful by the associated meaning of the other. It’s the death of the soul eternized. It is separation from God, the source of life forever. It is separation from heaven, angels and sainted ones forever. It’s separation from all that’s beautiful and good forever. It’s separation from all intellectual, social and moral pursuits which seem to accord with man’s nature. It’s companionship with Satan, demons, and damned in hell forever. Eternal death a terrible thing.”

Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the warnings of holy Scripture and we pray that the lesson of the experience of Satan may be a lesson for us and cause us even more certainly to flee to our Lord Jesus for his keeping power from the power of sin. We pray, O God, that Thou wilt cause us to hate sin and to love righteousness, to love Thy presence. We pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

“Between the Kingdom and the Great White Throne” by S. Lewis Johnson
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