



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 1:6-12

“The Plan, the Power, and the Promise”

TRANSCRIPT

Let’s turn to Acts chapter 1, verse 6 through verse 11 for our Scripture reading.

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying; Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them; It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel. Which also said; Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word, and now let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee that he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit by virtue of the successful completion of his representative and covenantal work in our behalf, and we thank Thee that he has shed forth the Holy Spirit, and that the third person of the eternal Trinity has come to indwell all of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are so grateful to think that we are united to him and to Thee through the Spirit. We thank Thee for this marvelous position that we have, and we ask, Lord, that in the day in which we live Thou wilt use us as Thou didst use the apostles and the early Christians in the manifestation of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in our generation.

We know, Lord, that not everyone was reached for the Gospel; not even the majority of people living. We thank Thee, however, for those that were, and recognize in that, the accomplishment of Thy purposes, for Thy purposes cannot be frustrated and fail. Help us, Lord, to be instruments in the accomplishment of Thy will in our day, and give us zeal and give us motivation. Give us earnestness, and sincerity in the presenting of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the unfolding of the true nature of human nature, and the true need that human beings have through Jesus Christ for the redemption of our sins, and the marvelous potential that exists through the grace of God and the gift of the Son and eternal salvation through him.

We pray for each one present in this meeting. We ask, Lord, that Thou would minister to all, and may the result of our meeting be edification, and growth, and grace, and in the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal. We commit this meeting to Thee. We ask Thy blessing upon this local church, and its leaders, its elders, and its deacons, its teachers, its Sunday school teachers, and the teachers of Bible classes, the radio ministry, and the printed page ministry. We commit it all to Thee Lord. We pray Thy blessing upon it for the glory of Jesus' name. And if it please Thee, use us as witnesses of him in our day and in this community and in this part of Dallas, to the uttermost parts of the earth. We pray for our country and its leadership. We pray, Lord, that Thy wilt direct, and guide, and glorify Thy name. We ask Thy pres—blessing in this meeting. May it be a meeting in which we it—each are lifted up and edified spiritually.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] One of the statements of the Apostles' Creed—which is I think, generally, neglected in the preaching of the Christian church—is the clause which begins with “He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” “He ascended into heaven.” It's not often that we hear messages on the Ascension. Mr. Spurgeon, I think it is who says about the Ascension, that it's a “luscious morsel upon which the sheep of God are not often found feeding.” When we think of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, we think of the first step of it as being the burial of our Lord in a new tomb. The fact that he buried in a new tomb owned by a rich man is just a suggestion of the fact that the exaltation is not far away, because it was not normal for one to be buried in that way. And then in his resurrection, we see a clear evidence of his exaltation, but the final step is the ascension of our Lord into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

It's really surprising, in the light of the importance of the Ascension for us to realize, that it is not even mentioned specifically in Matthew and John. Luke's Gospel records it, and then Luke again in his second book—the book of the Acts—records it again. It's alluded to in the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, but the textual evidence for that section is so weak that most New Testament scholars feel that we should forget that as being part of the Gospel of Mark. And if that is true, then it is Luke who is responsible for the truth concerning the ascension of our Lord, so far as the historical references are concerned, yet as we look at Matthew and John, the Ascension is assumed by those books, but not specifically mentioned.

What is the Ascension? Well, generally speaking, we could say it's the seal of heaven on the earthly work of our Lord. We often say the Resurrection is the evidence that the Father accepted the work of the Son. The Ascen—the Ascension, following in the same line, is the seal of the Father upon all that Jesus did in his earthly work, but more than that, it is the starting point of his heavenly ministry at the right hand of the Father in behalf of the people of God. We often speak about the

ministry of the Lord Jesus and say, “On the cross he finished his work.” Well, if we are thinking about the ground of our redemption, that is true. The ground of our redemption was accomplished when the blood was shed, and Jesus had borne the wrath of God for us, the people of God. But, strictly speaking, his work is not finished if we include the work that he does after he has finished the ground of the work of redemption, for the work of redemption grounded in the blood, is not finished until all the flock of God is brought successfully into the presence of the Lord. And so there is a sense in which we speak of the finished work of our Lord, and there is a sense in which we speak of the unfinished work of our Lord. The offering that was offered by the great high priest for the people of God; he lives to secure the effects of it, and so he lives at the right hand of the Father to, through his unfinished work, bring to successful completion all that he intended to do when he gave himself on the cross. He is never frustrated in his purposes, and he accomplishes precisely what he intended to do, and as high priest he lives to secure that work. So when we think of the Ascension of our Lord, and this statement in the Apostle’s Creed, “He ascended into heaven,” we should think of this as the starting point of the heavenly work, by which he brings to successful completion, all of his purposes grounded in the shedding of the blood.

Now, with that as a kind of introduction, we look at our passage, and we notice that in this short section Luke has given us our Lord’s new commission. He adds a new sense of comfort and consolation, which we derive from what transpires in his ascension, and finally in the last two verses—verse 10 and 11—we have emphasis upon the new expectation that is to stir the apostles and the people of God while the Lord Jesus is absent from us in a physical way. I said last week, that when we call the book of the Acts, “The Acts of the Apostles,” we are using a misleading term, because in the first place, in the book of Acts are recorded that acts of only four of the apostles, and not all of them of course; that is, not all of their works. And furthermore, it is not really the “Acts of the Apostles” that are recorded in the book of Acts, but the acts of our Lord. “The former treatise,” Luke begins by saying, “have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” So

the book of Acts—we tried to point out—is the record of the continuing ministry of the Lord Jesus; all that he continued to do and to teach.

So it is not a record of the acts of the apostles. One man whose writings I have always enjoyed entitles his book on Acts, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit,” trying to bring out, that it is not the apostles who are prominent, but the divine power lying behind them. Well, that’s better, but probably it would be best if we were to simply say, “This book records the continuing acts of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

John Masefield wrote a play, and that play was called, “The Trial of Jesus,” and in it he has a conversation between Longinus, the traditional name of the centurion who said, “Truly, this man was the Son of God,” and Claudia Procula, the wife of Pilate. And Claudia says to him in the play, “Do you think that he is dead?” And the centurion replies, “No, lady, I don’t.” “Then where is he?” Claudia Procula asks. “Let loose in the world, lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.” Well, that’s really what Acts lets us know. The Lord Jesus has been let loose in the world through the Holy Spirit, and he will accomplish his purposes, both for Jew and for Gentile.

There’s a great and needed emphasis I think, on the reality of the ascended living Christ in the book of the Acts, and if we read this book, and we read it simply as a history book, and we fail to realize that it is seeking to present to us that spiritual truth—the reality of an ascended living Jesus Christ—we have missed the major point of it.

Now, Luke will record facts that bear on that all the way through this book, and you probably will be able to pick them out. Just to give you an example. In the twenty-fourth verse of this very first chapter, when they are busy trying to select a successor to Judas, we read in verse 24, “And they prayed and said; Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen.” So they recognize it is the Lord who is doing his work still.

In chapter 2 in verse 33, in the midst of the sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter says, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

In other words, it is the Lord Jesus himself who gives the Holy Spirit, and therefore makes possible the work of the apostles, and of the people of God through this age.

In the forty-seventh verse of this chapter, when mention is made of the fact that people are being added constantly to the group of believers, the reference is, of course, to what God is doing, not to what men are doing.

In chapter 3, after the healing of the lame man, Peter says in verse 16 of chapter 3, “And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know.” In other words, it is the name of the Lord Jesus, or the Lord himself in his mighty power, who is working.

And then the later part of the book of Acts, as we know, gathers around the life and ministry of Paul, and on the Damascus Road, it is the Lord who meets the apostle, and has the dealings with the apostle that lead to the ministry of that great person. Paul heard the voice saying unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said; Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said; I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee kick against the pricks.”

And so Luke lets us know all the way through this book that it is the Lord Jesus, working from the right hand of the throne of God, and he works throughout this age. Isn't it striking that the book of Acts closes abruptly with just a statement concerning the continuation of ministry. Paul is preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the book ends. There are no—no salutation, no words addressed to anyone. Luke does not even tell us that he comes to an end of his book; all of that intended—no doubt by the Holy Spirit—to let us know, that what began in the book of Acts is continuing, and we are writing the twenty-ninth, and thirtieth, and the thirty-first, and so on chapters of the book of Acts. That is one of the messages Luke would have us get.

Now, coming back to our passage here, and the new commission that is given to them, you will see this underlined in what our Lord tells them that they are to do. Now, he has been ministering to them, and Luke says, “When they were come together, they asked of him saying; Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel again?” That's a perfectly natural question. It was natural for several reasons. Natural, because the Old Testament, which was the Scripture to them—they didn't

have any New Testament. The Bible to them, was the Old Testament. The Old Testament is full of passages over, and over again, which state that Israel is to have her kingdom upon the earth with David sitting upon the throne. That’s one of the great messages of the Old Testament; reiterated over and over and over again. So it would be natural just from that point, since he has finished his work of redemption, so far as the grounds of it are concerned, to ask him, “Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Further, the Lord Jesus, and John the Baptist had come, and their message was gathered around the expression, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.” And in fact, Jesus had said that he was not sent to the Gentiles, he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and Paul later will say that, “The Lord Jesus was a minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promises made unto the Father, and that the Gentiles might receive mercy.” So preeminently in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, is the ministry to the nation Israel. Now, in the Old Testament it was also stated, that as a result of what God would do through David’s seed and Abraham’s seed, the Gentiles would be blessed, but preeminently the promises—the covenants—belong to Israel. And in fact, as you know Paul says, “The covenants belong to them,” Romans chapter 9.

So one can see then from the Old Testament, from the Gospel ministry of John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus, it would be natural for them to ask this question, and further, in his post-resurrection ministry, in the third verse here it said he spent his time “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” It would then be natural for them to say, “Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?”

Now, the Lord does not rebuke this question. Some who do not like to think of an earthly kingdom, with the nation Israel having preeminence—some who do not like that idea have sought to find in this, a rebuke of the apostles for even asking such a question. Well, if it really were a rebuke of the fact of the hope of an earthly kingdom, he should not have said to them, “It’s not for you to know the times or the seasons.” That would be very, very misleading. So when they ask, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom,” Jesus doesn’t deny that they are going to have the kingdom.

He says simply, “It is not for them to know the times or the seasons.” Now, if you could look at this in the Greek text, you would see this further, because there is great stress in their question on time. In fact, that expression is thrown forward for emphasis. “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” So it is not a rebuke. It is only a word of information to them saying, “It’s not for them to know the time.” In other words, they are to remain ignorant of the precise date of his coming. That’s not surprising. The Lord Jesus said he was ignorant of the precise date of the second coming.

If I were to ask you a good theological question, I could ask you one like this. I would say, “How can you harmonize the omniscience of the eternal second person of the Trinity with the ignorance of Jesus? How would you answer that?” Well, if you were in a good theological class, and you had a theological mind—not everybody in theological classes have theological minds. Incidentally, when you’re put in Theology 101 in heaven, you’ll be able to answer this very well, but it’s not a hard question at all, if you’ll just remember the Lord Jesus was a divine person, but he possessed two natures. Out of his divine personality he knows the end from the beginning. He is the omniscient Son of God. Nothing is hidden from him, but he also has a human nature, and while he was here carrying out his redemptive ministry, he functioned as the perfect man, and, consequently, there were things that were hidden from him. It is not a sin not to know something that has not been revealed, and so every day the Lord Jesus received from the Father, instructions for his ministry. He said he did the things the Father asked him to do, and he said the things the Father gave him to say, so he lived the perfect, obedient life, never sinning. But there were things that were beyond his knowledge at particular points insofar as his human nature was concerned, so that is why he said, “No one knows the time of the second coming, not even the angels, nor the Son of Man, but the Father.” And they have not learned that lesson, because he’s still in his mediatorial work, and so therefore, he cannot really answer the question of time as the human mediator. I should say “divine human mediator,” but of course, in his mediatorial work, his human nature assumes prominence.

So “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? It’s not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.” There is no denial of the kingdom. If anything, there is an affirmation of it. But this is what they are to know now. He said, “But you shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me.” Or as the original text says, “my witnesses.” In other words, the new program is a program of witnessing. It’s a witnessing program.

Kate Oliver, many years ago in a meeting which I attended, was commenting upon witnessing, and she said that she had received a good testimony of what a witness was from a little child. She has asked a class, “What is a witness?” And one of the children replied, “A witness is somebody that’s seen something and can swear to it that it’s so.” I like that. “A witness is someone who’s seen something, and can swear to it that it’s so.” Well, that’s what a witness really is. He is a person who has seen something, and when we say that we are witnesses of Christ, of course we haven’t seen anything in the visible, bodily sense, but we’ve seen something spiritually. We’ve seen ourselves. We’ve seen Christ as the answer to our need. We’ve placed, by the grace of God, our faith in him, and what he did on the cross, and we, by the Holy Spirit, are convinced that it is so. And we know the experience of redemption, and ultimately, our salvation rests upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit given to us, and the certainty that goes along with it. Now, the Lord Jesus says, “You are to be my witnesses.” That’s the task now.

If I were to look at Believers Chapel and to give you an analysis of what we need at this stage in our history, I would say this: it is to recover the sense of the necessity of being his witnesses. As I look at the Chapel and the members of the Chapel speaking broadly, that is what it seems to me is missing. We are not carrying out our witnessing mit—ministry as I think we did at one time, and of course, as we ought to.

Every one of us is a witness, and day after day through the days of the week, it would be manifested in the fact that there would be new people being brought under the hearing of the ministry of the Word of God. There would also be individuals who would be being converted

through your ministry, through your testimony to them, and we'd have the constant experience of that. Now of course, there is some of that going on in the Chapel, and probably a whole lot of it that I know nothing about because the tendency of the people in the Chapel, I think truly, is to let God have the glory, and therefore, they don't speak of their experiences in a way that would cause us to pat them on the back. We're not looking for that at all, but I do think that we have forgotten our fundamental task, to some extent, which is to be a witness of Christ, and if we will recover that by the grace of God, we will see evidence of further growth in the Chapel, in spiritual experiences. So we are witnesses.

Karl Barth many years ago, writing about the Ascension had said that, “The present time in which we live is the time of the Word.” In other words, it's a time when the Word of God is to go forth through the individuals who make up the people of God. But one other thing that Professor Barth said that has stuck with me through the years was that, “This, the present day in which the Church has an absent Lord, and which they have the commission from him, is a time of running and racing.” I like that expression. “It's a time of running and racing.” In other words, we are to run and to race in the exposition through our personal testimony of what Christ has done and is doing. So it's a time of running and racing, and some of you need to get running. Jogging spiritually. Racing spiritually. Cut down on the other. Build up some of the other. It actually is healthier for eternal life, let me assure you.

Now, then he says, “You are witnesses unto me,” not unto the Church; surely, not unto Believers Chapel; not simply to doctrine, but of course, we cannot be a witness of Christ if we're not also at the same time, a witness of doctrine, for it is by doctrine that we know who Christ is, and what he has done; a witness of him, however. And further he says, “We are his witnesses.” In other words, our witness is from him—the living Lord—and directed toward what he has done and is able to do for us and for others. Now, that's the new commission.

In verse 9 he speaks of the new consolation. “And when he had spoken these things while they beheld, he was taken up in a—up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

Now, you would think perhaps, that since Elijah went up in a whirlwind in the midst of a chariot, that the Lord Jesus—the greater than Elijah—would ascend to heaven in some miraculous way; in the midst of a great crowd, so that many people would be deeply impressed, and we would have the “First Chariot Church” of the city of Jerusalem, or something like that, you know. But our Lord goes up in calm simplicity, with simply a few people observing. It’s a kind of voluntary ascending, as well as the fact, that the Father was involved in it. In one moment, it is said that he is taken up; in another, it says he ascends. It’s the Father completing his work. He raised him from the dead. He brings him to the right hand in triumph, and there he sits throughout this age.

What’s the signification of the Ascension? Let me just mention some things. In the first place, it confirms the destination of the risen Christ. He had said over, and over again, “I’m going to the Father.” Well, this is the confirmation of it. From this time on, the disciples know where his glorified human nature is, and so our Lord sits at the right hand of the Father in his glorified human nature. That’s his physical presence, but by the Spirit he is present in the life of every believer. He is at the right hand of the Father in his visible bodily presence—not visible to us—in his bodily presence, and he is present with us through the Spirit, wherever we may be. Secondly, it affirms the presence of a man in heaven. That was the goal of the incarnation. That was the goal of the whole plan of—of God. It is a plan by which men are to be saved through a representative mediator. Oh, I wish it were possible for us to have some armed men suddenly come in and say to you, “Now, you must stay two hours while Dr. Johnson talks about representative mediation, and to try to point out to you why this is the best way by which God could ever have acted. I fully believe it is, and can be shown to be so, but that will have to wait “Theology 101” in heaven.

Well, there is a man in heaven; a man in heaven. The old Brethren used to talk about, “There is a man in the glory, and there he stands as the representative man, and all who are members of the body of Christ, members of the people of God, have him as their representative.” That’s why Paul will say, “We are accepted in the beloved one.” It is by word virtue of what Christ has done, and the fact that what he has done is reckoned to those who believe in him, that when we say, “There is a

man in the glory,” we’re saying, “We are there too in him,” for we are looked at as being in our great representative. So there is a man in the glory, and then of course, there is in this fact, an unfolding of our position and our power. That is our position. That’s where we stand. We have been buried with him. We have been raised with him. We are seated with him in the heavenlies. That is our position, Paul explains in Ephesians chapter 2.

By the way, about fifteen years ago, I saw a—a cartoon in the *Wall Street Journal*. Now, you don’t look for spiritual things in the Wall Street Journal. If you do, you won’t find them. At any rate, this cartoon impressed me. It was a picture of the girders of a great skyscraper that was going up. All you could see were the girders; these great steel girders. And you could see the positions of various rooms, but just the girders. And then there were two workers who were in their working clothes and their hard hats, and they had—were sitting on one of the girders, and they had just opened their lunch—their—their particular little luncheon pails, and they were sitting there, and eating their sandwich. And one of them turned to the other one and said, “We are in the executive dining room.” Well, I presume that the point of it is, that they had actually looked at the plans—the architectural drawings—and on that forty-eighth floor—or whatever it was—that was to be the executive dining room. But all it was, was just four girders about, and they were sitting on them. Well, that’s a picture of position. We are in Christ at the right hand of the throne of God. We’re not there yet in all of the experience of it, but in our representative we are there.

The Ascension is also the source of the gift of the Spirit, because it was by his ascension, and then his session, that he was given as a reward for his finished work the gift of the Spirit, and he has poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon all the people of God. Luke mentions that. Peter mentions it in his sermon. In other words, one of the rewards of the successful work of the mediator was the gift of the Spirit to him, and then he has given the Spirit to the people of God. That, of course, becomes the origin of spiritual gifts. Every Christian has a spiritual gift. We’ll refer to this

more than once through the book of Acts, but everyone of us has a spiritual gift, a particular spiritual gift. That too flows out of his ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to us.

It is also the inauguration of our Lord’s priestly ministry. He is the high priest, not I. He is the high priest, not any person who arrogates to himself the title “pastor.” The Lord Jesus is the high priest of the people of God. Every believer is a priest, and we serve as priests under our great high priest. Some have been given special spiritual gifts. The elders hold office, having supervision, but he is the high priest. And in his work at the right hand of the Father, he lives—and he lives eternally—to secure the successful completion of his work. That’s why he’s so concerned about every believer, and seeing that every believer reaches perfection, maturity, and the maturity of perfection in him, and he never fails in his work. If it’s necessary, he’ll pass us through certain experiences to bring us to maturity. Some of them are not happy. Some are very happy. Some are sad. But he will secure his work. Isn’t that great? Isn’t it great to have a Lord who secures that which is our ultimate and eternal good? Nothing could be more wonderful than having a great high priest who lives to intercede for us, and to save us completely. I don’t see how anyone cannot fail to shout, “Hallelujah”—at least within his heart—to realize that that is true of every believer in Christ.

And then we have a great hope. We read in the tenth and eleventh verses, “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.” Who were they? Moses and Elijah? Who knows? At any rate, there were two men standing by them in white apparel. What does that signify? Well, I think it signifies, at its fundamental least, that though Jesus Christ is gone, we are not forgotten. And so these two men—perhaps angelic beings, maybe Moses and Elijah, who knows—but they had an important message, and their important message to the apostles was this; “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” Mr. Spurgeon used to make fun of the early Brethren, because they made so much over the second coming of Christ, and he would say, “Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye looking up into heaven?” And he was trying to stir them a bit, for spending too much time on the prophetic word, and not enough on Christian witnessing. The text reads, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus

who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” And so how will Jesus come again? Well, look at it for a moment and think about it. He went up personally. He will come back personally. He went up in bodily form—glorified bodily form, but bodily form. He will come back in glorified bodily form. He went up in visible form. He will come back in visible form. He went up from a particular place, the Mount of Olives. He will come back—Zechariah tells us—to a particular place, the Mount of Olives.

This is the time of the restoration of the kingdom. The apostles have asked the question, “Will thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Here is the answer to the question. When he comes back at his second advent, and stands upon the Mount of Olives, it is at that point that he will restore the kingdom to Israel, and Israel will have its place of preeminence in the kingdom of God upon the earth. It’s all so plain, that one wonders how some can miss it.

Now, when we think about the second coming of the Lord Jesus, think of the emphasis in the Bible upon this event. It’s the first promise after the Fall that includes the first reference to it, because when Adam is told that, “the seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent,” that’s the first indication of the second advent of the Lord Jesus. Now, it’s rather remote, we have to admit, but we know that the Apostle Paul, in the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans in the sixteenth chapter and the twentieth verse says, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” And so in the day of the Apostle Paul, Satan had not yet been bruised completely, and that still awaits the second advent of the Lord Jesus. So the first promise after the Fall includes the coming of the Lord Jesus a second time—Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15.

The last promise of the Old Testament, as we have it in our Old Testaments from the book of Malachi, has reference to the second advent of Christ. The Lord’s first message after the Ascension, through these two men, is that he is coming again. And then the last promise of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, recorded by the Apostle John in chapter 22 of the book of Revelation is this; “He which testifieth these things saith; Surely I come quickly.”

Now, you can see from this, that the Bible is full of the message concerning the second advent of the Lord Jesus. And it's not only full of it, but there is great stress made upon it. It is our hope. It is our expectation. In the midst of our witnessing unto him, we look forward to the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was first beginning my ministry—I was thinking yesterday, I have been preaching for forty years this year, I think. Think of that. Forty years, and I'm still orthodox. When I first began, there was a man who was popular—a popular apologete for the Christian faith. His name was Dr. Harry Rimmer. He was a very interesting man. He challenged all of the unbelievers he possibly could. Whether professors, or ordinary people, he would challenge them to debates. He is very skillful in that kind of thing. In one of his books which he wrote, he tells of a conversation that he had with a lady—a young lady—after one of his meetings. He had spoken on the second advent, and after the meeting this very charming young lady came and asked him, “How is it possible for a man who seems to know the Bible so well, to believe in the second coming of Jesus? I should think you would know, that there is no promise of Jesus coming back; not anywhere in the New Testament.” He said, “I was greatly surprised, but I asked; Where did you get such a fantastic idea? Why, the New Testament is full of promises of his coming.” And with a rather superior—superior smile he said, “The young lady said; Oh no, only last week my pastor”—her great high priest—“my pastor showed us there is no such promise. He read a verse in the Bible that says; where is the promise of his coming? And he showed us there is none.” Now, I know you're laughing, but you know, in the *Interpreter's Bible*, in the exposition of this particular passage, the exposition leads one to believe the same thing; that there is no second coming to the earth at all. Any rate he said, “He was utterly astounded.” He said, “Did your pastor read the rest of the verse?” And she said, “There isn't any more to it.” And he said, “Instead of replying, I just opened up the Bible and I read the verse, the whole verse, like any honest man would wish to do.” And then he read the text where Peter is talking and he said, “In the last days scoffers shall come, and they will say; where is the promise of his coming?” And he said, “When he finished, the young lady was mad enough to pull his hair.” And she

cried, “Don’t you dare call my pastor a—a scoffer.” And he said, “Young lady, I didn’t call your pastor a scoffer. Peter did.”

Well, the Bible is full of promises of the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it’s a glorious truth, and why anyone would feel any antipathy to it, can only be explained by the fact, that there are people in this world who are natural men, and who need the witness of believers to the truth of God as found in the Scriptures.

Let me conclude by saying this; in the light of this statement, “He ascended into heaven,” found in the Apostles’ Creed, and the substantiation of it from the first chapter of the book of Acts, I don’t wonder any longer why the Lord Jesus said in the Upper Room to the apostles, “It’s expedient for you that I go away.” Because now that he has reached the right hand of the Father, he can minister to each of us as he ministered to every one of those apostles. You do not fall behind any of the apostles in the power of giving testimony to Jesus Christ. May God help you to realize that. May God help you to realize, that when you testify to him, there stands behind you the power and the purpose of God, and the man vanished from sight, but the Messiah did not depart, as is evident by the promise of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew he says, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Always. All the days. If you are a Greek student, not only “all the days,” but “all of every part of each day.” All together with us. Always with us. Why should we not boldly give testimony to him? May God help us to go out from the Chapel this morning, and have a good week of witnessing for him. This church will feel the difference. You will know the difference. The world will know the difference.

If you’re here this morning and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to him, who offered the blood as an atonement for your sin. You may come by the grace of God. Cast yourself upon him and what he’s done and receive the gift of eternal life, which qualifies you for witnessing. May we stand for the benediction.

“The Plan, the Power, and the Promise” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee to read and study the Word of God, so many years after the apostles felt the power of the presence of our Lord. O God...