



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 12:12-19

“The Triumphal Entry”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] So let's turn to John chapter 12 and read verse 12 through verse 19 for the Scripture reading. Now remember in the context, for it is important to fully appreciate John chapter 12. Lazarus has been restored to life, there has been a little celebration in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany celebrating, no doubt, the fact that he had been raised from the dead. And there has been a tremendously important response to the ministry of our Lord and the resurrection of Lazarus. Some are believing in our Lord by virtue of that fact and others are very much upset, the chief priests, and they are now consulting to put Lazarus to death. And it's about at this time that the triumphal entry takes place and in verse 12 John records his account of it.

“On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Hosanna is the transliteration of a Hebrew expression which means simply “save, we pray”. And we are not to give a literal meaning probably. In other words, we are not to think that this is precisely what they were saying, “Save, we pray,” as if perhaps this was a prayer addressed to the Father that he would save through the Son although that makes sense. Or that it was addressed to the Son, “Save, we pray, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” It was used so often that it became just an

expression. An expression of jubilation, an expression of praise, and we are not to take it absolutely literally any more than we are the expressions we often use. When we tell someone farewell we say, “Goodbye.” Now what does goodbye mean really? Good B-Y-E, what does that mean? Most of us do not really understand what that means literally, we just say it as a way of expressing our farewell to someone. Hosanna became an expression very much like that and I think that is the way in which it is to be taken here. It’s an expression of praise but not to be taken in its precisely literal form of “save, we pray”. Verse 14): And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, (you notice this is all that John says about that rather elaborate preparation that our Lord made according to the synoptic gospels of sending disciples off. They obtained two animals, on one of them our Lord sat, all that John says, ‘Jesus, when he had found a young ass,’ and since that occurred before verses 12 and 13 that clause refers to something that had previously taken place,) sat thereon; as it is written, fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered then they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, were bearing record, (or were witnessing. That is, they were witnessing to the fact that he had called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from the dead.) For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.”

We’ve often said as we’ve gone through the Gospel of John that the term world is to be understood in the light of its context and that has some specific reference to our understanding of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And we have maintained the position throughout the Gospel of John that generally speaking when John refers to the world he doesn’t refer to everyone without exception but to all without distinction. That is, he includes both Jews and

Gentiles in his meaning when he refers to the term “world”. Well one can easily see that the word world here does not mean every single individual, for it’s obvious the Pharisees have not gone after him. And as a matter of fact those who had gone after him were in the minority as we shall see. So he says in verse 19, “Behold, the world is gone after him,” that’s their way of overemphasizing the fact that a considerable number of people though a minority have become attached to the Lord Jesus Christ. It only illustrates the fact that we’ve been trying to say over and over again that words are to be understood in the light of their contexts and that is so important in reading the Bible with understanding. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. We bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours to open the Scriptures. We know that our appreciation of the word of God is deficient. That even the most concerned of us has understanding that is insufficient. And that even when we regard the Scriptures as important most of us do not have sufficient appreciation of the importance of the divine revelation. And perhaps, Lord, if we did have a deeper appreciation of the importance we would be much more submissive to the teaching, much more concerned about the content, and much more desirous of having our lives in submission to the word of God. May, Lord, our time of reflection upon the word today issue in a more significant obedience to the truth of the word. We thank Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that he loved us and loosed sinners from their sins in his own precious blood. And we thank Thee for the work of the Holy Spirit who has caused us to understand that we are sinners and has brought us in effectual grace to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. We are grateful Lord and we pray that in the days and months and years that Thou dost give us here upon the earth that we may grow in the knowledge of him who and has loved us so much. And we pray Lord that as the days go by our lives may be pleasing to Thee.

We pray for this assembly of believers. We pray for the elders of the chapel, for all of the ministries that proceed from this place that go out many thousands of miles from here. That the hand of the Lord may be upon them and that there may be fruit. We thank Thee and praise Thee for

all of the promises of God as well for we need those promises. And we pray for particularly the sick, minister to them. For the bereaved, minister to them as well. We thank Thee for the words of consolation found in the word of God and we ask Lord that we may lean upon them in times of trial and learn to rest in our great sovereign God. What a shepherd we do have and we thank Thee Lord that as sheep, he guards us and protects us and guides us and ultimately brings us home to the heavenly fold. And we pray that through the ministry of the word today we may be strengthened in our faith. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] When we think of the major events of the life of Christ, always included is the triumphal entry. I have from time to time spoken of it as the untriumphal entry for the simple reason that it was not ultimately a triumphal entry. It looked like a triumphal entry but it was not really a triumphal entry. It did inaugurate the last week of the days of his flesh, the expression of the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews uses in order to refer to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. We call it Palm Sunday because of the use of the palm branches in the praise of our Lord. It was a day of wild rapture of enthusiasm, a day of delirium of eager welcome as someone has called it. But actually there was little genuine spirituality manifest in the crowds as they welcomed the Lord Jesus. Some of them from Galilee had an attachment to them that was important and probably was real but it was not very deep. As someone has put it, “Provincial recognition did not carry national assent.” And so when the Lord came while there were a few of his friends who were genuinely attached to him with their limited understanding of divine truth, the great mass of the people in the land did not really understand who Jesus Christ was and what he was to perform.

They were misinformed, as George MacDonald's *That Holy Thing* puts it. They were all looking for a king to slay their foes and lift them high. Thou camest a little baby thing that made a woman cry. That needs, of course, a little correction but it is generally true that they were looking for a Messianic king who would establish a kingdom upon the earth of power and glory and deliver them from the Romans. And while, of course, he did come to establish a kingdom and a kingdom

that was political but not holy political and in fact not at its heart political, but spiritual. And that is why they are misunderstanding the significance of our Lord’s coming.

One of the things that scholars talk about is the Messianic secret. And by that they refer to the fact that the Lord Jesus cautioned his disciples, strangely it seems, not to tell that he was the Messiah after he performed some mighty work. We see instances of that, for example, when Peter made his great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and the Lord Jesus warned them not to say anything about it. He was on the mount of transfiguration and a great change took place in the Lord Jesus, a remarkable thing took place, and then afterwards the Lord Jesus says don’t tell anybody about it.

It’s so strange. You would think that since he came to present himself as a Messianic King when there was some miracle performed that seemed to suggest that he was more than human or when he said something that was to the point that it would have been proper to say, “Now go out and tell everybody about this,” but he said keep quiet about it. The reason for that I think is rather simple, although I hate it’s rather simple in the light of the fact that many of our New Testament scholars have stumbled over it. But it was simple for this reason, their concept of the Messianic King was wrong. They thought of a king as simply a great political figure who would bring them deliverance from the Romans and their kingdom would thus become a kingdom as it was in the days of David or the days of Solomon, a truly great kingdom. They did not understand the fact that the cross was why Jesus came first and then secondarily to lead to a Messianic Kingdom upon the earth.

So in their proclamation of a kingdom with a false understanding in their telling others that he is the Messiah with a false understanding of what the Messianic office was, they would have been spreading error rather than truth. And that is why the Lord Jesus said, “In their state of misunderstanding, don’t tell people that I’m the Messiah,” for the people did not understand the Messianic office as it was set forth in Scripture. Now that is plain from verse 16 here, “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him.”

So up to this point the Lord Jesus has played down, he has sought to make his apostles and others play down his Messianic claims but now things are different. Here he does present himself as the Messianic King because prophecy had said that he would come in this form and he does come in that form. Now you know in reading through the Gospel of John to this point, you probably have remembered the expression that has occurred more than once, “My hour has not yet come.”

Now here his hour comes. And this is the last week of his ministry and he will bring himself forward in Israel as the King. Now it would help us I think just to review for about four minutes what the Bible says about the Kingdom of God. It goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 1 for there, remember, after the creation and Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden God told them that they were to have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that crept. So they were given dominion over the earth. It was God’s ultimate plan for man that man should be king of the earth under God. It was proper to speak of man as the king of the earth. That’s where the biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God begins. And Adam was king of the earth but shortly after, according to Scripture, Adam fell. The dominion was lost and lost until one should come and regain it for them.

God began the program which led ultimately to the coming of Christ by the giving of the promises to Abraham. Abraham was given a wide and great promise of a land and people and then after the initial giving of the promises, God said to Abraham, “Kings shall come out of thee.” So he was given the promise of a king in his line, in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Then the Old Testament gives us various indications of things that pertain to this king who is to come. For example in the 49th chapter of the Book of Genesis it is stated that the King is to come from the tribe of Judah and our Lord, of course, was the lion of the tribe of Judah.

Then in 1 Chronicles chapter 17, and 2 Samuel chapter 7, and Psalm 89, the Davidic covenant was given. And it was specifically said that not only shall the King come from the tribe of Judah but he shall come from the family of Jesse or the family of David. He will be a son of David, son of Abraham, and son of David. In Micah chapter 5 it is stated the King will be born in

Bethlehem of Judaea and then in passages like Daniel chapter 9 it is stated that he will come at the conclusion of the 69 weeks of Israel's history which lead right up to the triumphal entry of the Lord Jesus, here described in John chapter 12. One other passage in the Old Testament among several others that describe some significant things about the king who is to come is the passage in Zechariah chapter 9, and verse 9. There it is stated, “Rejoice, for thy King cometh to thee. He will be riding upon an ass, upon the colt a foal of an ass. He will be just and he will have salvation with him.”

Now there are many other texts, it's not necessary for us to go into detail, but you can see from this that Adam had dominion over the earth, he lost it. God's program of redemption is concerned with the regaining of dominion over the earth and leads ultimately to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as he hangs on the cross at Calvary by the sovereign providence of God, there is written over his cross, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” He is the King. And it is the work of the King to die for sinners and make it possible for citizens of the Kingdom of God on the earth to exist. So the Lord Jesus regains by his redemptive work what Adam lost by his sin in the Garden of Eden. Now the remainder of the New Testament is the story by which and the details by which the Lord Jesus regains practical dominion over the earth and the Book of Revelation sets out many of the details and the great judgments of the future and the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now with that as just a kind of general overview I think it's easier for us to place now this event of the triumphal entry in the program of God. He is now coming to the city of the King where he will accomplish his redemptive work and he is offering himself as Israel's promised King. Now probably you've read the other contexts of the accounts in the synoptic gospels of the triumphal entry of our Lord. You notice that John's account is telescoped. Many things are left out that are found in the other accounts. Each of the gospel writers has his own purpose and that accounts for the differences often that exist between them.

The order of events on this day, putting things together seems to be something like this: the Lord Jesus departs from Bethany and he selects two disciples and he asks them to go into the city and to obtain two animals, the details are given in a passage like Matthew chapter 21. And the two disciples go off to obtain the animals with which he will make his entrance. He has with him, evidently, Galileans who have come down for the celebration for the feast of Passover and these are individuals who are disciples of the Lord Jesus, more or less, probably more. And so as he moves toward the city of Jerusalem, caught up in the enthusiasm of the festive occasion and what is happening, they spread garments in the way, just like Sir Walter Raleigh is supposed to have done with his coat. The pilgrims from Jerusalem, having heard of this remarkable miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus and having heard that he who performed it is nearby, Bethany was not far away, you know, just a few miles, they go out from the city to meet him. And as he's moving toward the city those from the city, a small group relatively but at least interested and interested enough to want to see him, they go out and they meet the ones who come with the animals and the two of these groups converge and meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

The enthusiasm mounts because the people who've seen him raise Lazarus from the dead or who were there in the vicinity of that are telling their story in the midst of the enthusiastic talk of the crowds. And so the enthusiasm grows. The multitude with our Lord continues to speak of Lazarus and more and more are influenced until finally the Pharisees and some of the crowd in opposition to our Lord goes out to meet the crowd coming in.

The Pharisees, amid the crowd, bid him to stop the cheering that is going on because they are saying, “Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,” and they don't believe he's the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord so they appeal to him to stop them for saying those things about him. And even the children would be shouting things like that as well and the Lord Jesus said if those children kept their mouths shut even though stones would cry out. In other words, this is the time of his manifestation and God is going to be sure that

this manifestation of our Lord as King will take place and the children are the instruments as well as others of the sovereign voice of God.

Finally the Lord Jesus tops the Mount of Olives, looks down over the city of Jerusalem and breaks out into weeping. And then entering the city and one of the gospel accounts says the whole city was stirred by the coming of our Lord and asking, “Who is this,” and words like, “Why, he’s the prophet.” What a letdown. He’s the prophet. What a letdown. Why, he is King of kings and Lord of Lord and he will accomplish the atoning sacrifice. He goes to the temple, he heals the blind and the lame, the children shout in the temple, and he is encouraged to shut them up and he refuses to do it. The Pharisees then speak to each other frustratingly, “What are we going to do about it, nothing is working, the whole world seems to be going after him.” And after his triumphal entry the Lord retires to Bethany for the evening. Well John’s account has some of these details and others of the details are not.

Now let’s notice, verse 14 we read, “And Jesus, when he had found a young ass,” I begin here because this statement is one that actually precedes chronologically verses 12 and 13. The incident is described for us in Matthew chapter 21, verse 1 through 7 and I think it might be wise for us to read these few verses from Matthew 21 so that we will all be acquainted with the background. Matthew writes in Matthew 21,

“And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man shall say anything unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”

And the important thing about this is simply that our Lord is carrying out something that might be called a piece of prophetic or Messianic symbolism. You see, he asks for two animals, he will sit upon one of them coming into the city and he is seeking positively and clearly to enter the city as Zechariah said the King would enter. So it's a giant object lesson. We all have seen teachers teach children with object lessons, well this was his object lesson. We turn to the Old Testament; many of the prophets gave their messages in this way. You can find many illustrations in the Old Testament of the way the prophets taught by going through the motions physically that would illustrate the message that God had given to them. And so the Lord Jesus is illustrating by this object lesson what he really was. He was the one of whom Zechariah had prophesied.

Now it is important to notice that he came into the city on an ass. Now the ass was the symbol of peace and poverty and our Lord Jesus comes into the city of Jerusalem as King on the ass because he comes as the King of peace. And he also comes as a lowly King. The palm branches were also symbols, they were symbols of life, of longevity, and joy and furthermore they were particularly associated with the Feast of Tabernacles because the Feast of Tabernacles was the feast in which they celebrated the future Kingdom of God upon the earth. So in the use of the palm branches and in the use of the animals from Zechariah 9 our Lord was saying just as plainly as he possibly could to anyone who was conversant with Holy Scripture that, “I am the King that Zechariah has prophesied about and I am introducing the kingdom that is suggested by the Feast of Tabernacles. He wanted to preserve the significance of this in their minds by this great object lesson.

It's interesting that in our Lord's ministry he engaged in the same kind of thing at the beginning that he does here at the conclusion of his public ministry. Remember when he first began his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth after John the Baptist's head was lopped off he knew that the time had come for him to begin to preach and he began by preaching the very same thing that John the Baptist preached, “Repent, for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand.” He entered into the synagogue in Nazareth to give his first ministry as the claimant to the throne of the Messiah. He entered engaged in the synagogue ministry, when the time came for the reading of Scripture he was

handed the book and he stood up and he read from Isaiah chapter 61, verse 1 and verse 2. That was the reading for that day and at the time he closed the book in the middle of the text, actually, sat down and began to teach. It was the custom for the teachers to teach sitting down in the synagogue. So he sat down and taught and everybody was amazed at the words of grace that flowed from his mouth. Wouldn't you have liked to have been in the synagogue in Nazareth and to have heard the Lord Jesus expound the Messianic prophecies? I certainly would have loved to have been there.

At any rate, when he finished he also added a few things that were not too popular with the people. That is usually the case with those who preach the word of God and he added a few things that stirred up the people. They said, “Isn't this Joseph's son?” They were amazed at what he was saying and he said to them, “Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal thyself. Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thy country.’” And Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country but I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias when the heaven was shut up three years and six months when great famine was throughout the land but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” In other words, there were many widows in the land but he was not sent to any widows but this widow. Well that's preaching distinguishing grace, isn't it?

And then we read, “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, (Elijah,) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” Now that is the wrong way in which to speak to people of the land. And so we read, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath. And so they rose up.” It was not that they objected to the fact that they were in the Bible, they were in their Bible, everything he said was true to Scripture. They just got mad at the idea that God would minister to people outside the land and not to them. “They rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” And then we read, “But he passing through the

midst of them went his way.” A magnificent display of his Messianic power right in the midst of them at the beginning of his ministry.

Now we come to the conclusion of his ministry and again this magnificent display of his kingship takes place. He wants to advertise the fact that he is the king and so he comes into the city in this way, goes to the temple and there performs some acts of healing. Someone has called this, “Christ’s necessary circumlocution.” He was intending to impress upon the people at the beginning of his ministry and at the end of it that he was performing the ministry that the Messiah would perform so there would be no excuse in recognizing him as the Messiah.

Now in verse 12 and verse 13 John writes, “Many people who had come to the feast when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” So the crowd leaves Jerusalem for Bethany, singing shallowly Psalm 118, verse 25 and verse 26. I’d like for you to notice this, first of all they misinterpret prophecy. They say, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,” they are willing to praise him as King but they say nothing whatsoever about the fact that he is just and that he has salvation. They do not understand the necessity of the redemptive work and they do not praise the fact that he is going to accomplish redemptive work, they are interested solely in the political aspects of his reign. So they misinterpret prophecy.

They also misinterpret our Lord himself. In the Lukan account it says they praised him because of the mighty works that he had accomplished. They are great admirers of miracles, miracles of healing and other kinds of miracles. But as far as understanding his redemptive work and praising him for that, that takes second place in all of their praise of him. So it’s not surprising that our Lord in the midst of crowds that are shouting out, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,” should break out into weeping over the city. Because, you see, it isn’t sufficient to understand that he is King, one must understand that his kingship comes by means of a

cross and that it is necessary for the cross to take place in order that he may enter truly into his ministry as King.

Now I have some friends and I don't in any way intend to suggest they are not believers, they are, they believe in the cross. But they tend to think that the Lord Jesus came to offer a kingdom to Israel as if Israel had accepted the kingdom and the King, the cross would take second place. I don't think they really mean to say that but nevertheless they have put it in that way, that he came to offer the kingdom. And when they did not respond he postponed the kingdom. Now there is a sense in which some of that is true but we should never forget that even if the nation Israel had, just to think hypothetically, if the nation Israel had responded, the cross was still necessary. And there must be a cross before there can be any kingdom. Now there were individuals who recognized his kingship beforehand. In fact, the thief on the cross said, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” He understood that. He understood things that others did not. He's been called the greatest theologian of his day because he understood something the apostles did not understand. So he did understand that there was to be a King and a kingdom. And he says, “Remember me when you come in your kingdom.” But we must keep things in proper order.

The Lord Jesus finally says to the disciples on the Emmaus road, “Oh fools and slow of heart, to understand everything written in the prophets, (Moses and the prophets,) ought not Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory.” It's the sufferings first and then the glory. And we cannot reverse that. That's exceedingly important. So even if we were to say, “If Israel had responded, then our Lord's kingdom may have come.” It would not have come apart from the cross. We must assume then that the Gentiles would have crucified him or that he would have been crucified by some unbelievers and the Gentiles. The cross is absolutely essential. We must have first cross and then kingdom.

So they misinterpret the prophecy, they misinterpret his person, they do not understand that he is just and therefore there must be the payment of the penalty of our sins. And that, of course, is

what I think is particularly brought out by just. Just and having salvation. Their praise exalts the might of him but not his right among men by virtue of the saving work.

So isn't it striking, paradoxically when they are saying, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord, they are both praising him and they are also blaspheming him. It's hard to do that in one statement but they were doing it. They were praising him as the King but they were also blaspheming him by omitting the fact that he's a King who is King by virtue of a cross. And so by excluding the cross they were really attacking the saviorhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's possible today for people to praise Jesus Christ out of a lack of understanding of who he is and what he has done.

Luke tells us that they were praising him and they were saying, “Glory to God in the highest,” and they were saying nothing about things on the earth. Well, that's the logical outcome of it. Not understanding their need, not understanding what must take place on the earth, they were thinking only about the political kingdom and what that would mean to heaven, failing to realize that they needed redemption first. Now of course the King and the kingdom are realized ultimately in the future. Israel did not respond, Israel with the Gentiles crucified the Lord Jesus Christ and in the meantime now God is gathering his people together into the church of Jesus Christ. But he shall come and he shall come in the future, not upon an ass, upon the colt of a foal of an ass but he shall come out of heaven using the symbolism of Revelation chapter 19, on a white horse with the hosts of heaven and he will, of course, bring order into a chaotic universe as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let me close with just a few comments. First of all, emotional enthusiasm for Jesus Christ is far different from earnest faith in him. Now the people who cried out, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,” were likely to be people who had some attachment to the Lord Jesus. It is not they who later on say, “Crucify him, crucify him,” as some Bible teachers have suggested. As you look at these accounts carefully it's evident that those who were shouting this were those who were familiar with his ministry from the Northern part of the

land. As I said earlier, the provincial recognition, however, did not carry national assent. So they were shouting out of a failed and incomplete understanding of the Lord Jesus. Later on those in the city who were antagonistic to him would be crying out, “Crucify him, crucify him.” But one thing you can say is this, that emotional enthusiasm is far different from earnest faith. And while it’s not they who say later, “Not this man should be delivered, but Barabbas.” It is, however, one of those very men who stood around the coals of fire and when asked by a little girl, “You’re one of them, are you not?” He said, “I am not.” “Yes you are, I have seen you with him.” And finally the great Apostle Peter said, “I don’t even know the man,” and added a few words of an expletive nature with his confession of lack of knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Later on they say, “His blood be on us,” and, “Crucify him, crucify,” emotional enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus is not earnest faith in him. It’s well for us as Christians to remember that because we have a lot of emotional enthusiasm for Christianity today. A lot of it is unreal Christianity. In fact, many of the great terms of the faith have become common words and now don’t have any significance. We have the term “born again” which has become so common that every time I see it I say, “Oh yeah? [Laughter] What kind of born again do you mean?” You mean biblical new birth or just some kind of outward change of life that expresses nothing more than some form of reformation.”

Another thing that is important is that Israel’s failure to respond to the word of God was due to their ignorance of the word. The Lord Jesus wept over the city and have you noticed the words that he used to explain why he wept? Listen, he said, “If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace,” then he goes on to say, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” So our Lord traces the failure to their lack of knowledge. They did not understand the things that were found in the word of God.

A few weeks back in the Tuesday night study I referred to an article that appeared in *The Presbyterian Journal*. And in *The Presbyterian Journal* there was a report of some things that George Gallup has said. The title of the article was “Gallup Sees Americans as Prey for False Prophets.”

These are some words that Mr. Gallup wrote as a commentary on the 1982 edition of religion in America, a new collection of previously published Gallup poll data prepared by the Princeton Religion Research Center. Now Mr. Gallup lists four reasons for this concern of his over the spiritual state of the United States. He says, “First of all, there’s a glaring lack of knowledge about the Ten Commandments and about the basic tenants of our religious heritage, a high level of credulity among Americans. For example, a high proportion even among regular churchgoers believe in astrology. At times it seems that Americans are prepared to believe in almost anything,” he said. How many of you believe in astrology, would you raise your hand? [Laughter] You wouldn’t dare do it now. [Laughter] How many of you read your horoscope? You don’t have to raise your hand. Some of you who started to do it, did not know. [Laughter] “A lack of spiritual discipline in our lives,” he said. “Our prayer life, for example, appears to lack the structure, the focus and intensity it demands. And then what some regard as a continuing anti-intellectual strain in our religious life.” Mr. Gallup says there’s some other factors but after, I don’t want to read the whole article, he concludes the article with an interesting comment. He said that the Bible may be America’s least read bestseller. “It tops the bestseller lists year after year, we all know, and sales figures suggests that there’s several Bibles for every man woman and child and maybe dog and cat,” he says, “in America.” [Laughter] But he found that most Americans are still, and these are his words, “biblical illiterates,” unquote, “who seldom turn to the Bible for guidance.” That’s one of the reasons we’re weak. That’s why we’re not strong in our faith.

I also read, on Tuesday night, a letter that I received from a lady in Alabama who had been listening to the tapes and possibly also from the radio broadcast over there but since we’re off the Birmingham station now probably just from the tapes but in the course of the letter which was written last month, she says, “Thanks for the Tapes Ministry,” and she said, “You’ve aided me for a year now.” And she comments that in the providence of God she had been moved from a Bible grounded Calvinistic church to a church where all that is preached is witnessing. I assumed it was because she was moved from one area to another. And she put in parenthesis a very striking

comment. She said, “This is a witnessing church where all that’s preached is witnessing,” quote, “But I haven’t yet heard the message we’re supposed to witness to.” Now isn’t that sad? And I think that’s tragic that in a Christian church you should be exhorted to witness and not told the message to which you are to witness.

It’s like Mr. Spurgeon says, that people shout, “Believe, believe!” but what are we to believe. “Repent, repent!” but of what are we to repent? “Turn, turn!” but to whom are we to return. Then she goes on in a footnote at the conclusion of the letter, “PS, you’re right Dr. Johnson, if people would,” now this she has in underline, “If people would read the Scripture and think, we would all believe the same thing.”

Well, I do know this, I don’t know whether we’d all believe the same thing but we certainly would have a large measure of agreement about what the Bible teaches because the Bible is patently clear in its major teaching. But it is true, we don’t read the Bible. That is why we have a proliferation of Christian psychologists, and Christian psychiatrists, and all kinds of counseling centers. And really the pastors throughout the country are attending conference after conference in which they are given seminars on counseling because they have so many people who are earnestly coming to them for counseling over their daily problems and they are legitimately confused and disturbed and upset and they do need some help. But if they would read the Scriptures, the preachers would have time to get back to preaching the word of God. The Lord Jesus said, “If you just knew,” you see, if they had known Zechariah and they had seen him coming at this precise time as Daniel said he would come and knowing that he was son of David and that this day, the day of the triumphal entry, is the day that Daniel had said would be the precise time when the Messiah should come, what a difference it would have made for them.

Well the day is coming, the Bible tells us, in which he will come this time not upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass, but on a white horse from heaven to bring order into this disordered universe and to judge, finally, those that are opposed to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. And so I appeal to you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to recognize the teaching of the

word of God. Flee to the Scriptures and to our Lord who has set forth in them his first coming and lowliness has taken place. His second coming in glory and power is yet to come. How soon, the Bible does not make plain, but oh how important it is for us to be rightly related to him, don't make the mistake that the generation of our Lord's day made in failing to recognize him. Come to understand your own lost condition, your sin, guilt, condemnation. Flee to Christ who is the only recourse in refuge that we have. Come to him, believe in him, trust in his saving work is our appeal to you.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent object lessons given to inform us of our lost condition and of the exalted glory...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]