



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 18:28-32

"Pilate and the Jews"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well it is a pleasure to turn to the Gospel of John again. When I was on one of the recent trips, one of the friends of mine of many years was making some comments to another friend concerning the Gospel of John. This individual has been listening over the radio to the ministry of the Gospel of John from Believers Chapel. And in spite of years of encouragement from her family and also from other friends, she has remained strongly ensconced in the Arminian tradition of interpretation. And finally, the force of the Gospel of John has begun to so much weigh upon her, and she's a lovely person. We have a good relationship together, but she just does not seem to be able to understand the approach to the word of God from the standpoint of the sovereignty of God. Finally, she made the statement not too long ago that she didn't believe that anybody ought to ever preach on the Gospel of John. [Laughter] I thought that was a wonderful confirmation of the teaching that the apostle has given us in this great book, because if anyone is stronger on the Apostle Paul on the sovereignty of God, it is the Apostle John who is simply recording, of course, the words of our Lord for the most part.

So I am delighted to be able to come back and go over again some of these wonderful truths in the Gospel of John. I've been reading recently the life of a Free Church minister in the country of Scotland. It's been very interesting to me, because many of the places where he has been or where

he has preached are places that are known to me. And I've been convicted quite a bit from reading what he has written. It is a diary of his experiences as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for about fifty years. And the diary was not published, of course, until his death. After his death they discovered that he had diaries for all of these years. And there's a lot of intimate expressions of response to the word of God himself, and response to his congregations. He was ministering in Scotland on the west. And then he went up on the Island of Skye. And then went finally to the Island of Lewis and Stonaway where he engaged in the lengthiest period of time in his ministry.

What is interesting to read the accounts of the meetings week after week and he comments frequently on the weather. And the weather, as you probably would imagine in Scotland is not the greatest kind of weather for people coming out to a meeting such as this. And he will speak about wind and lashing rain. And nevertheless he still has to go out. In the earlier part of his ministry he went out on his bicycle and cycled to the meetings, sometimes ten, fifteen miles away. And then later on he had an old automobile. I've forgotten the name of it. I'd never heard of it before, something like a Riolet, but I don't want to do any damage to Rowlett, Texas by calling it a Riolet.

But anyway, it was very interesting to read. He says the weather is horrible and yet when he arrives at the meeting the meeting will be packed with people who are interested in hearing the word of God. So it's very interesting to read it in the light of our weather in Texas, which is so conducive to coming out in public meetings. And very rarely do we have the kind of weather they have, but nevertheless those simple minded people over there were very responsive to the Scriptures. It was a lesson to me to read. It is a lesson. I've not finished his book. I've read about two hundred pages of his diary. It's a lesson to put first things first. And certainly the things of the word of God are really first things first for us.

Well, we're turning this morning to the subject of "Pilate and the Jews." And we're going to read for our Scripture reading John 18, verse 28 through verse 32. So will you take your Bibles or New Testaments and follow along as I read these verses from the Authorized Version.

"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. (Now of course the "they" here refers to the Jewish authorities.) Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him (Now it's difficult to convey the emphasis that Pilate puts upon the pronoun "ye." It would be something like, "Then you take him," because the "ye" is emphatic in the original text. You take him.), and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death (Now that statement has occasioned quite a bit of discussion by the students of the Gospel of John. There is some tradition to the effect that it was illegal for the Jewish people to put anyone to death. That is the Romans has laid down that requirement and they were forbidden to do that. In fact the Talmud says something like that. On the other hand, it's really a more complicated question than that. And the reason that it is more complicated is just from reading the New Testament we know that twice in the Gospel of John, John says they were seeking to stone him to death. Then, of course, we know they did stone Stephen to death. So the Jewish authorities were responsible for the deaths of individuals when they were under the authority of Rome. So it's not at all certain that there was a law from the Romans that it was illegal for them to put anyone to death. Possibly what is meant is that it was illegal for them to crucify someone. They could stone someone to death. And since it's likely, that we shall seek to show later on, that Caiaphas and the authorities wished our Lord to be crucified rather than stoned to death that this is what lies in the background. It is not lawful for us to put any many to death -- that is, by crucifixion. But at any rate, the question is somewhat uncertain at this point and until we have further information we'll have to leave it that way. But the last sentence is important and we read that John says,): That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die."

Now, in order to understand that statement we must turn back a few pages to the 12th chapter and read the passage to which John refers in chapter 18 and verse 32. But in John chapter 12 and verse 30 we read these words, "Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Now John understands that to be a prophecy of the crucifixion as is evident in chapter 18 verse 32, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." In other words, John sees our Lord's crucifixion as the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy that being lifted up in death he would draw all men, Jews and Gentiles, unto himself. Well, may the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek who contrary to the earthly Levitical priesthood, a temporal and fleshly priesthood, ministers in the power of an indestructible life. And we thank Thee that having offered the once and for all sacrifice he has obtained for us an eternal redemption. Eternal because he lives forever to secure the things that he has accomplished by the blood that he shed upon that cross that was lifted up before the eyes of the men of his day and which is now lifted up and exalted before our eyes as we read and study the inspired word of God.

We are so grateful, Lord, for the providence with which Thou dost guide and direct the steps of not only the Lord Jesus Christ and not only the saints of God, although a special providence is theirs, but we thank Thee for the providence that governs and guides all of the affairs of men. We thank Thee for the sovereignty of our great God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that Thou hast worked all things according to the counsel of Thine own will.

And Lord, it is such a comfort to us, because we know that having come to know him we rest in the arms of the eternal Savior who has omnipotent power and who under God lives as the great mediator to see the successful fruition of all of his purposes. And we thank Thee that we are in

those purposes. How marvelous it is to be assured of the forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Father, we would pray today for Believers Chapel for its elders, for its deacons, and for its members, and for its friends. And we pray, Lord, that Thy hand may be upon us for spiritual good. We pray, Lord, that would guide and direct us and use us an instrument for the accomplishment of Thy purposes. We thank Thee for the whole body of Christ and pray for all that have truly come into the understanding of the grace of God in the cross. O God, guard and guide and strengthen and establish and build up all of the saints in the body of Christ. We pray for our country. We ask for Thy blessing upon our President. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt guide and direct him. Give him wisdom in these very critical days.

And Father, we would ask especially for Thy blessing upon those who are mentioned in our calendar of concern. We know that while our future is certain, while we as the people of God are moving on under the providence of God toward the city of God, that nevertheless day by day we need the strengthening, we need the activity and work of the Holy Spirit in all of the experiences of life. There are many trials and tribulations through which we must pass in order to enter the kingdom of God. And we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt be with the suffering, troubled, perplexed, bereaving saints of God. And those that are mentioned in our calendar of concern, Lord, we hold them all up before Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon them, strengthen them, encourage them. Meet their needs, whatever they may be.

Now, be with us in this service. May as we sing the hymns we sing them to the glory of Christ. And as we hear the word may it exalt our risen Savior in whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] The Ecclesiastical trial of our Lord Jesus Christ has ended with the death penalty for blasphemy. Now, we do not have the final record of that in the Gospel of John but we do in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 22 and verse 66 through verse 71. John pays considerable attention to the civil trial of our Lord, which now begins. And just as the Ecclesiastical trial had three phases, so this

one does too. For our Lord will appear before Pilate. And then Luke will record how that he then appears before Herod, when Pilate hears that Herod is in town. And finally, he will again appear before Pilate, and Pilate will pass the final judgment upon him.

Now the result of this, of course, is that both religion represented by the Jewish nation and their response to our Lord and government reject him who established both of them. One of the striking statements made in Matthew chapter 27 verse 11 as Matthew records this incident of our Lord before Pilate is the statement, "Jesus stood before the governor." Now, that of course is a way of looking at it from the stand point of men. Jesus stood before the governor. But actually, as we shall see, the reverse is true. It is the governor who stands before the Lord Jesus. Spiritually and morally it is Pilate who is being judged and now our Lord; Pilate and Rome not Jesus and his followers are on trial.

The Apostle Paul was greatly impressed with this scene, it seems. Because in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 13 in one of his comments that he makes to young Timothy he says, "I give thee charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things. And before Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." So evidently the apostle had reflected upon this and thought here we have an outstanding instance of a man making a confession of the truth of God. But we're not surprised, for as we shall see and especially next week when we deal further with our Lord's appearance before Pilate we shall see, of course, that it is a magnificent confession of the truth which our Lord makes.

Now the characters that appear in this little incident are Jesus, the Jews, and Pilate. And perhaps it would be wise to say a word about Pilate. Pilate was the prefect of Judea. He's often called the procurator. The reason for this is that for a long time it was thought that Pilate was the procurator, but a few years back an inscription was uncovered in which it's clear from the Latin text that he was not a procurator but a prefect. So we'll call him the prefect of Judaea. If I occasionally slip and forget and call him procurator you'll understand that that's simply a slip of the tongue.

The details of Pilate's life are somewhat obscure. But we do have tradition for a number of things that seem relatively certain. He was a man of adventurous spirit, and he spent his early years in frontier fighting. Then he married well. That always is useful to men. He married well. He married Claudia, who was the daughter of Julia who was the profligate daughter of Augustus. And so Augustus the Emperor had a daughter by the name of Julia, and Claudia was her daughter. And so Pilate married into royalty so to speak. His father-in-law was Tiberius who was the emperor. And as a reward for his work or perhaps as a marriage gift he made him the prefect of Judaea.

From the start Pilate had difficulty with the Jews. He incurred their opposition and hatred by ordering the standards of his cohorts to be taken into Jerusalem by night. And when the day came and the Jews saw the standards of the Roman army in their city they bitterly resented that. It was for them a violation of their sacred law, and even though they were under the authority of the Romans it was their privilege, they thought, to have their city as their holy city, and so by the thousands the Jews journeyed to Caesarea where the prefect maintained his residence. And there they protested the sacrilege of the standards in the city of Jerusalem. Pilate finally became so weary with their objections, I think we can understand. We live in the days of street riots. Well, that was essentially what was happening. And so finally he ordered his men to surround the Jews and they were threatened with instant death if they didn't abandon their protests. But to his surprise they all fell down on the earth. They bared their necks and invited death rather than surrender their principles. And so Pilate was obliged to relent, and he withdrew the standards from Jerusalem.

There is another text in the New Testament in Luke chapter 13 that reveals something about Pilate too. There we read that he mingled the blood of certain Galileans with their sacrifices. Now we are not told, and we do not know what was the pretext for the taking of their lives. But the governor had established a reputation for haughtiness and cruelty. In fact the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, writes of Pilate and makes the sweeping indictment of "corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, endless and intolerable cruelties." That's the end of the quotation. The remarkable thing about this is that

when you read the New Testament and read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John you do not ever read that the evangelists attacked Pilate. One only learns the kind of person Pilate is from examining the records. They do not attack him. And perhaps they were guided by the wisdom of God the Holy Spirit as they did not attack him personally.

What emerges, of course, is that Pilate is really a kind of politician. Someone has said, "Politics is a game with two sides and a fence." And Pilate is a good illustration of a man whose principles would lead him to make a certain decision but whose personal interests go contrary to his principles, and so he follows the things that are compatible with his personal interests. He does not ask "What is my duty?" Or "What is right?" But he asks, "What is good for me?" Now, occasionally we have politicians who are like that, too. In fact, it's hard to find any politician today who does not really ask what is in my interest rather than what is right, or what is my duty. I read the other day of a person who was asked what did he think of a couple of candidates who were running for office. He said, "Every time I think of them I thank God that only one of them can be elected." [Laughter] Well, Pilate was a politician and we shall not be surprised to see that he will seek to ride the fence. But in the end, of course, he loses.

Now John says, "They led Jesus from Caiaphas following the condemnation of the religious leaders unto the hall of judgment. The hall of judgment was either the fortress of Antonio, which was in the northwest corner of the temple area where the Roman Garrison usually stayed, or it was Herod's palace. We are not sure, so we just have to leave it at this. It was the hall of judgment. And we read that it was early and so we gather from this and the other statements that it was in the morning probably between six or seven o'clock, probably the day had just begun. And there the Lord Jesus is led.

One cannot help but reflect upon this against the background of Israel's bondage in Egypt, because they are in bondage again. The Pharaoh of days gone by was the one who held them in bondage. But now in Rome it is the Roman emperor who holds them in bondage. And so in a sense we can say the Pharaoh of days gone by lives on in Caesar and in Rome. And the striking thing



about this is that Israel returns to the house of bondage and prefers the house of bondage to the liberty that may come from the one who is the new and final Moses, the great prophet. And so they appeal to Moses, and they dismiss the fulfillment of all that Moses wrote about, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh the blindness of men to spiritual truth. And we can see no better illustration of what it is to be blind concerning spiritual things to see how they preferred bondage under Caesar in Romans to deliverance by the one of whom their Mosaic Law really spoke.

In a sense Levi, the temporal priest, priest according to the law of a fleshly or carnal commandment, dismisses Melchizedek the eternal priest who offers the once and for all sacrifice by which we have eternal redemption. It's amazing. But later on, of course, Melchizedek the eternal priest will dismiss the temporal priesthood and dismiss it forever. And the veil of the temple is rent in twain at death of our Lord and the Mosaic system passes out of its existence as a system of authority and validity.

You know, when I read these words and read these accounts I cannot help but constantly reflect upon the irony that the apostles have lying back of their words that they have written, because you will not understand these gospel accounts, and particularly the accounts of our Lord's passion as fully as you may unless you recognize that they are seeing a magnificent illustration of divine irony in everything that has happened, marvelous irony really. Notice how scrupulous these Jewish leaders are in the fulfillment of the little details of the Mosaic Law. They don't want to be defiled, and so they will not enter into the hall of judgment because the hall of judgment is in the hands of Gentiles. And to enter into the hall of judgment will bring about the possibility of defilement. One of the reasons for that was that the Gentiles in those days were accustomed to take abortions and to dispose of them in their own particular way, which to the Jews meant that they had handled dead bodies. And so if the Jews went into a Gentile's home they were liable to come in contact indirectly with a dead body. And so they established the general tradition that the Jews should not enter into the house of the Gentiles.

Now mind you that was not taught in the Bible. Of course it was taught in the Bible that when a person touched a dead body he was unclean for a certain period of time. But there [was] no law that said a Jew could not enter into a Gentile's house, but that was their tradition. And they were so anxious to avoid defilement, because this is the weekend of the Passover feast, remember. They are so anxious to avoid this defilement that they will not enter into the hall of judgment, but all the time they will be plotting the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ; so very scrupulous about the little details of tradition, but totally unconcerned about the vast sin of the murder of the Son of God.

One of the Dutch commentators said, "At no time was the pronounced contrast between the gnat and the camel as conspicuous as it is at this moment." Now you will remember, of course, the text which says, "Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." That really means something like strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. So you can see, our Lord says, you can see a man in the east, who's getting ready to drink wine out of a flask. And what does he do? Well he takes out a piece of cloth. He puts it over the head of the bottle, and he drinks wine through the cloth, because he does not want any gnats to get in his throat. But our Lord says about the Pharisees here that they are blind guides and they strain out a gnat, but they gulp down a camel. And you just see a Jewish man straining out a little gnat out of his wine but at the same time swallowing an entire camel. Well, this is our Lord's picture, you see, of these individuals who are concerned over defilement, but at the same time they're murdering our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Calvin has some interesting things to say about this. He says, "They behave like a man who strains out a little crumb of bread and swallows a whole loaf. A gnat is a tiny creature, we know, and a camel a huge beast. Could anything be more absurd than to strain one's wine or water to avoid offense to the throat by swallowing a gnat, yet to make no difficulty about gulping in a camel? But these are the things that hypocrites play with. They ignore judgment, mercy, and faith, indeed dissipate the whole law. But in minor affairs they are overly austere and rigid. While they pretend kiss the feet of God like this they proudly spit in his face."

Now, what makes it even more significant is that John says they didn't enter into the hall of judgment that they might not be defiled, but on the other hand that they might eat the Passover. Now, isn't this striking? Think of the irony of it. Who is the Passover lamb? Well Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 in about verse 7 that Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb. He is the Passover lamb. One reading the text of Scripture up to this point would have come to that conclusion as the apostle did. But he says, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed unto us."

But now, they are slaying the Passover lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, and are concerned about entering into the hall of judgment lest they be defiled. They can see all of the outward features, the external signs of the Mosaic Law, but the significance of the Mosaic Law is totally lost upon them. Let me illustrate. Let's just suppose, for example, that I were an accomplished artist. I think you've probably seen puzzles like this. You've seen picture puzzles in which as you look at the puzzle it's a picture. But you are to find certain things that are in the picture. And you turn it around. You look at it in various ways and finally you see a head over here in the midst of the trees. And you see something over here in the midst of the bushes. And then you see something over here that's in the rock, for example. And soon the picture that you're looking at becomes an entirely different picture.

I have before me a picture that a Chinese photographer is supposed to have made. Now, you probably cannot make much sense of it. It's a picture of snow with the black part being the earth that obtrudes from the snow. And this photographer, so the tradition has it, who made this picture he was very much concerned about spiritual things; very much disturbed. And he had heard about Christianity and about Jesus Christ. Well he made this picture and he was very disturbed about spiritual things and he was just pondering this picture and suddenly in the picture there emerged the face of Jesus Christ. You probably cannot see it. Last night I put it in the hands of Martha and I said, "What do you make of this?" And she looked at it, she looked at it, looked at it, and finally she said, "I don't see anything." I said, "It's the picture of Christ." She said, "I still don't see it." And finally I said, "Turn it this way and look." And she turned it that way and looked, and she had her

glasses on too, and still she could not make anything out of it. It's the kind of thing that you puzzle and puzzle and puzzle about and finally you will see the face of Christ.

And so this Chinese photographer is supposed to have been converted through it. I don't recommend that as a method of conversion mind you. [Laughter] But nevertheless it illustrates the point that often one does not really see the reality until he has pondered for awhile. It's possible, you see, to look at the Old Testament and see nothing but a collection of civil laws, and ceremonial laws, and the moral law and not realize that all of it is designed to bring before our eyes a vast object lesson of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. So here in the midst of their daily life they will not enter into the hall of judgment, because they want to eat the Passover. All the symbols of the Mosaic Law cry out Jesus of Nazareth is the Passover lamb and they are worried about the scrupulous little things of their tradition and at the same time they are crucifying him of whom their law spoke plainly and clearly and vividly and loudly. The irony is excruciating.

Now the conversation follows. It's a very brief one. We will look next week in more length at the remainder of Pilate's conversation with our Lord. But here we read that Pilate when he saw that they were not coming in, or perhaps someone told him the Jews are not going to come in because they don't want to be defiled by the hall of judgment. Well, Pilate went out to them. In other words, in due form and yielding to their scrupulosity he goes out and he asks, "What's the accusation?" We read, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" They answered and said unto him the accusation is, no they don't do that. They don't really give any accusation. As a matter of fact, they're on the horns of a dilemma. Because if they really say what they're thinking, then Pilate of course will have to say that cannot be done. So being on the horns of a dilemma they want him crucified but they cannot really say what they want to do, what they want him to do, they try a snow job. In other words, they retreat into generalities. And they say, "Look, we are just people, are we not? If he were not a malefactor we wouldn't have delivered him up to you." So no accusation is given, they just simply say, "Believe us. If we are just men, and we are, then surely we wouldn't

deliver him up to you if he were a good man would we? We would deliver him up to you only if he was a bad man." So they do not give any accusation.

So Pilate, he's not done, he says, "Okay, you take him and do what you want to with him. Judge him according to your law." Ah, but they don't want to judge him according to their law, because they want the Romans to crucify him. And so they say, "It's not lawful for us to put any man to death." I like Pilate's reply, "You take him," because there's a text in the Proverbs that says, "Answer a fool according to his folly." And so they have answered without an accusation and so he says, "Okay, you do it." And the result is they must reveal their devilish purpose which is our Lord's death. So it's not lawful for us to put any man to death. And then John sees the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy in that. He says in the 32 verse, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die."

Now let me say a few words about crucifixion, because I think that it bears upon this particular text here. It is likely that what John sees is that our Lord has prophesied that he is going to be lifted up when he dies. Remember back in John 3:14 Jesus had said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." And then in chapter 12 and verse 32, the passage we read, Jesus again said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men, Jews and Gentiles, unto me." So Jesus has prophesied that he would die by being lifted up.

Now John sees, of course, that if this is what is going to come to pass, he's going to be lifted up, then that is a beautiful illustration of providential fulfillment, because if the Jews had put him to death they would stone him. That would not be a lifting up. But if the Romans put him to death they would crucify him, so in the crucifixion of him he will be lifted up. And so John sees a providential fulfillment of the prophecy of the Lord Jesus that he would be lifted when he is put to death.

Now the reason that the Jews desired the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is not simply that they wanted Roman participation in the death of our Lord. But it probably lies in the nature of

crucifixion itself. One of the outstanding German scholars of the day is Martin Hengel. And Professor Hengel who is professor at the University of Tübingen has done a great deal of study in the past twenty years or so on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. His books are magnificent works of scholarship, even though as far as theology goes he leaves much to be desired. He is a universalist. There are many other things about him, of course, that indicate that his views are not scriptural in the ultimate. But nevertheless there is a great deal of help that one may gain or learn from the reading of Hengel's works.

He has a special study of crucifixion, and he has pointed out crucifixion from the Roman standpoint that crucifixion was a political and military punishment. It was, of course, a specific expression of man's inhumanity to man because of the violence and cruelty and brutality of crucifixion. It was, of course, the public display of a naked victim at a prominent place, usually at some crossroads where people traveled. In the theater, often on high ground; sometimes special efforts were made for the man to be crucified at the place of his crime. It was designed to represent the uttermost humiliation. And furthermore, it always, it seems, had something of a spiritual significance and particularly to Jews, of course, because the Jews had word from Moses to the effect, in Deuteronomy 21 and verse 23, "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day. For he that is hanged is accursed of God." So the Jews were taught that the body of an individual who was hanged should not be left on the tree for nightfall. In fact, that's why our Lord was quickly taken down from the cross before the sun went down, because they were not to leave bodies on the tree. "That which is hanged on the tree is accursed of God."

In Roman times crucifixion was practiced above all in dangerous criminals and members of the lowest classes, people outlawed from society or slaves who on the whole had no rights at all. And Professor Hengel writes, "In other words, in death of Jesus of Nazareth God identified himself with the extreme of human wretchedness which Jesus endured as a representative of us all in order to bring us to the freedom of the children of God." In other words, Jesus did not die a gentle death like Socrates with his cup of hemlock, much less passing on old and full of years like the patriarchs.

Rather, he died like a slave or a common criminal in torment on a sea of shame. His death, frankly, was a scandal. Paul puts it, "Such a death as the death of a cross."

Nothing could be worse than the death that Jesus died. And this is what the chief priests desired. They desired the death of our Lord by crucifixion in order that there would be no question about the humiliating nature of our Lord's claims. Could this possibly be the Son of the blessed one who was crucified and died the most humiliating way that a person could die? You can see that when the apostles went through the Jewish world preaching the fact that the Son of God died upon a cross of crucifixion, the Jews would say, "How is it possible for the Son of God to die the most humiliating kind of death that a person could possibly die?" On the face of it the claims of our Lord cannot be true.

The Romans would feel the same way, and that is why he was a stumbling block to Jews and Gentiles. And of course, the apostles see something entirely different in it. They see that the Jews, by insisting on crucifixion, are moved by the unwitting divine necessity. Our Lord has prophesied that he would die in that way. They carry out the will of God thinking that they are blunting his claims by crucifying him. But God, by this very crucifixion, is preaching the truth of the cross. Jesus Christ is a curse, but he is a curse for us. He dies under the curse of God, because he bears the judgment for sin and for sinners. As Paul puts it, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us. As it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree." And so poor old Caiaphas, seeking to do his will, discovers and now knows that he had done simply the will of God. "He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him." What a magnificent display of the sovereign hand of God in the working of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

We will discredit that false prophet. And they discover, of course, that it is they who are discredited. And the cross becomes God's flannel graph in which he proclaims the sin of man. We are the cursed ones. But he proclaims the Son as the Redeemer of the world who has died for the sins of sinners. And of course, in the crucifixion itself being lifted up and in the placarding of that

for the human race there is an anticipation of the ultimate victory of the Son of God. It's not surprising in my opinion that when Jesus says that the Son of man is to be lifted up that he uses the verb "to be lifted up" that is the common word for exaltation. In other words, he shall be exalted. The very lifting up of our Lord is anticipatory of the exaltation of the Son of God who dies for sinners.

I must say, Caiaphas has done us a great good turn by insisting upon the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And we learn the nature of sin, the nature of our Lord's substitution, and the nature of the salvation and ultimate victory which is obtained by the shedding of his precious blood. Instead of discrediting him they unconsciously glorified him. And we want to say, come to his glory all ye people and worship him, oh my soul. Or as we sing often in our Sunday night meeting, "Lifted up was he to die, it is finished was his cry. Now in heaven exalted high, hallelujah what a Savior!"

What's your relationship to Jesus Christ? Is he simply as the Jews hoped, and as the Romans too hoped for they united in the crucifixion of the Son of God, is he just a humiliation? Is he just a misguided prophet who thought that he was the Son of God? Is he a false Messiah, one of the long lines of those who have claimed to be the Messiah? Is he really the Son of the Blessed One? Could it be possible that the Son of God should die in such a humiliating way? Is it possible that the sovereign Messiah of God should be so at the mercy of men that they should be able to put him to the most humiliating death of all, the crucifixion? Or is this designed by God to lay stress upon the fact that anybody who would do this to him must be the vilest of sinners, and we all have had our hands in the crucifixion of Christ?

Jewish people today resent very much that Christians in the past have accused them of deicide, of crucifying the Son of God, a divine being. It is, of course, true. The Christian church has often, however, given the impression that it was the Jews who were solely responsible for our Lord's death. The Scriptures, however, say the Gentiles as well had been guilty of deicide. In fact, the human race is guilty of deicide in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But thank God it did come to pass or otherwise we should be lost without hope, without God in the world. But by virtue



of that saving sacrifice it is possible for us, through faith in him, to be delivered from our wicked hands, which have nailed him to the tree.

If you're here this morning and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we invite you to come to him and receive as a free gift, for you have nothing with which to commend yourself to God. No good works, no church membership, no observance of the ordinances, no education, no culture can ever make you acceptable to him. The only thing that can bring to you the forgiveness of sins is the acknowledgement of your sin and the reception of the gift of justification and life from a sovereign merciful God. May God help you to come. Acknowledge your sin and receive as a free gift eternal life.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these marvelous accounts that the apostles have written for us. And we are so grateful to Thee that Thou didst marvelously overrule the intentions of men to accomplish the divine purposes. And we thank Thee that the Lord Jesus was willing to become the curse that we might be delivered from it.

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**