



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Daniel 7:15

"Daniel and the Beasts, part II"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For our Scripture reading we turn to Daniel chapter 7 and verse 15 through verse 28. For those of you who are here for the first time, we're really expounding the Book of Revelation, but when you come to chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation, reference is made to two beasts. And the background of that statement and that chapter is found in Daniel chapter 7 and so we're devoting two messages, last week and this week, to the exposition of Daniel chapter 7 that you might understand Revelation thirteen better which we begin next week the Lord willing.

Now, the preceding Sunday we looked at the first fourteen verses of the chapter. And now, in verses 15 through 28 Daniel gives us the interpretation of the vision that he saw described in verses 1 through 14, and the prophet writes beginning with verse 15 of Daniel 7,

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess

the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.' Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and it will devour the whole earth and then tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. And He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

Just one point, the Aramaic clauses or clause at the end of verse 27, "His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him," may also be rendered, "Their kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey them," the reference being to the people. It's difficult to be absolutely certain of which. Fortunately, the ultimate sense is essentially the same.

May the Lord bless the reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and for the light that it gives us on the future as well as on our path today. We thank Thee that it points us to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom that is to come through the ages of the ages. And we thank Thee also for the great principles that are found within this revelation which have their application for us today. We praise Thee for the prophetic word, which is so useful to us now, and so enlightening for us with reference to the future.

We thank Thee Lord for this day in which we live, we pray for the Church of Jesus Christ and for all of its member wherever they may be. May there be a responsiveness to the truth on the part of all of us. We pray for the sick particularly. We ask Thy blessing upon them and especially those of whom we have been praying for so long. We thank Thee for some encouragements. We pray that Thou would give healing with accordance to with thy will. We pray for our country. And we especially, Lord, remember those who have suffered from the calamities. We pray for the individuals particularly who have lost loved ones and who have lost possessions and property. We commit our meeting to Thee. Bless the singing of the hymn and the exposition of the Scripture for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today is the second of our two part series in preparation for Revelation thirteen, "Daniel and the Beasts". And we have said, as we said in the Scripture reading, that the beasts of Revelation thirteen make it necessary for us to turn to Daniel where their history begins in the prophetic word. I do think that if we were to read the Book of Revelation and not have some understanding of the Book of Daniel we would be greatly handicapped in understanding the book.

One of the nice things about the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel is the fact that it covers the entire course of events from Daniel's day to the comings, plural, of the Messiah. In other words, included within Daniel chapter 7 is the history of the prophetic Scriptures from the day of Daniel to the first coming and on to the second coming. Daniel has been called, and I think properly so, the prophet of the times of the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles being that time when Israel, having been under the hand of God disciplined as a nation by being sent out from their land, and since that time transpired around the beginning or end of the 6th Century before Christ, around 606 or 605 B.C.

And since they have never yet been in control of their land, incidentally when I say that obviously there's some that'd like to say, "Well, they're in control of it now." Well, no not really. They do not control the temple area, which is very very significant for them. And in fact, as there has been speculation recently among them of whether they should rebuild the temple, it's evident that they still don't feel the freedom to go ahead and do it without great conflict ensuing. But from the time of Nebuchadnezzar and the beginning of the captivity to the present day Israel still is trodden down of the Gentiles and will be until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled as our Lord Jesus said in his Olivet Discourse.

That is a governmental term, that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. That's a governmental term. We are familiar, if we read the Bible much with Paul's term in Romans chapter 11, "The fullness of the Gentiles," that's a soteriological term and refers to the full number of Gentiles who in the present age are grafted into the olive tree or become members of the people of God. So Daniel is the prophet of that time. It now is twenty-five hundred years plus and it has been going since, and Israel has been under discipline. I think it's very interesting that Daniel is given two visions of the times of the Gentiles.

In chapter 2 through Nebuchadnezzar and the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw we have a heathen king who is given a picture of a vast, awe-inspiring image and Daniel in

interpreting it, being given that interpretation by God, points out to Nebuchadnezzar that that is the way that the times of the Gentiles are looked at from the standpoint of a heathen king such as Nebuchadnezzar. And so consequently the picture they have of the times of the Gentiles represented by that great, vast, large image that saw is of an awe-inspiring series of kingdoms, Nebuchadnezzar being the first. So that's an outward, human way of looking at the history of the world. And so everything looks great, grand, and glorious.

And we call the emperors names like Alexander the Great, for example. God does not look upon human kings in the same way. In chapter 7 with the prophets view of the times of the Gentiles we learn that because for Daniel and for prophets and for Lord God, he looks at the kingdoms of the earth and the great men who rule them as being beasts, and not simply beasts, but the term "wild beast" is proper for them.

Now, you know last week looked at the first fourteen verses, and I'll try to summarize it because there are some who no doubt were not here last week. Where were you, incidentally? But at any rate, Daniel describes the rise of the beasts and he says as he was looking at in his vision he saw rising out of the great sea four beasts. The first, a lion, representative of the Babylonian kingdom. That identification is made specifically in chapter 2 and followed up in chapter 7. That kingdom known for its cruelty was the first, the kingdom under which Daniel lived. And then second, Daniel saw a bear. The bear is known for its veracity and Biblical students believe that, in the case of the bear, that we have God's representation through the prophet of the Medo-Persian kingdom.

Those who have read the history of the Persian Empire, for example, may remember that the victories that the Persian kings gained were gained largely by the vast numbers of individuals that were in their armies. When I was studying classical Greek and we were reading Xenophon's Anabasis, one of the things that we read had to do with the vast numbers of people that made up the forces of the Persians. In fact, so much so that the professor under whom I studied often made references to the fact that it almost

seemed impossible for those armies to be as large as they were said to be. Darius Hystaspes, for example, invaded Sythia and he took seven hundred thousand men with him. In addition, he took a naval force of six hundred ships.

Xerxes, when he made his expeditions against Greece, that was undertaken with two and a half million fighting men and these men were gathered, incidentally, from fifty-six different nations and if you add the camp followers there must have been five million people involved in this. So it's not surprising that Justin should remark that, "Those armies were able to drink up rivers on their marches but could not exhaust the royal treasury," which will tell you something about how wealthy they were relatively speaking. Artaxerxes Longimanus used six hundred thousand men to subdue the one province of Egypt and raised one million two hundred thousand men to crush the rebellion of his brother Cyrus.

And so you can see when think of the Medo-Persian Empire that it would be properly represented by a bear, which is known for it's veracity. Aristotle said once that the bear was an omnivorous animal. And for those of us who are not as scholarly and do not read Aristotle, if you read Griswells on the comic page, you will get the same picture because if you read Griswells you know that those bears represented by that comic strip eat everything that it is possible for one to eat. So when you think of the Medo-Persian Empire, you think of an Empire with vast numbers of people.

Alexander arose, the Grecian Empire with him, and he represented by the leopard because solarity, speed of movement characterized him, as well as great wisdom and strength so far as military strategy was concerned.

And finally, Daniel saw the fourth beast but it was so different from the others that he couldn't describe it. We've called it a nondescript beast. He says it was dreadful, it was terrifying, it was extremely strong, it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet. And it was different from all the beasts that went before and it had ten horns. And while Daniel was looking he also saw another

horn rise up among the ten a little one and three of the first horns were pulled up out of the others by the roots and behold this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great things. Well, the vision follows with a picture of the ruin of these beasts destroyed by the Lord God and then at the conclusion of the vision as Daniel kept looking,

"One like the son of man was coming to the Ancient of Days, (evidently a reference to the father) and was presented before the Ancient of Days and then the Ancient of Days gave him dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve him. (Pardon me. Daniel goes on to say that) the dominion that give was an everlasting dominion which would not pass away."

Now, you would think that if Daniel had been given a marvelous vision like this that he wouldn't have the response to it that he has. We read, for example, in the fifteenth verse, that Daniel's spirit was distressed within him and the visions in his mind kept alarming him. So distressed, alarmed, he asserts himself into the vision and converses with an attendant angel in order to find out the meaning of this great vision that had been given to him.

Now, the angel will give him two answers and we'll spend most of our time on the last one. It's very simple to figure this out if you just read carefully the verses from verse 15 on through the remainder of the chapter. But looking at the first answer that the angel gives him in verse 15 through verse 18, this is what we read. I'll just read through it again,

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of

these things: (now this is from the angel) These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come."

Now, perhaps the angel thought he would get away with that short answer because all that he has said is simply that the four beasts, which you saw, are four kings. Now, that was very important for Daniel to know that, of course, but everything else is passed over by the angel and he says, "The saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come." You do learn one thing that's important, you learn that the kings are interchangeable with the beasts. So we are to understand the beasts as being kings.

Now, later on it will become evident that they could also be understood as kingdoms. So the beasts are kings or kingdoms. It's not surprising to find king and kingdom interchanged. You may remember in your study of European history that Louis XIV once made a very famous statement, which Biblical students have latched onto because it's very useful in illustrating biblical truth. But Louis XIV once said, "I am France." And what he wanted suggest by that was simply that when you think about France you cannot really think about France unless you think about me. And if you think about me, all of the destiny and well being of this land is bound up in me, "I am France." There are some other illustrations of this kind of speech.

Looking out over the audience, I don't think that any of you will probably remember or alive in such a way that you remembered Theodore Roosevelt as President of the United States, and I want to say publicly that I don't either in case you wonder. [Laughter] But in reading history you may remember that Theodore Roosevelt split the Republican Party at the National Convention that was held in Chicago. And his followers formed what was known as the Progressive Party and shortly after that event a European came to American asked how many parties we have in this country. And he was told,

"We have three: we have the Republican Party, we have the Democratic Party, and we have Roosevelt." Now, the Progressive Party was his party and it was so much his party that he and the party were identified. And so much so that when Roosevelt died, Theodore Roosevelt, when he died the Progressive Party in that sense passed out of existence. So the kings and the kingdom are identified, and I think properly.

The angel says the fifth kingdom, the kingdom that will be given to the son of Man after the four kingdoms have had their existence, that fifth kingdom is one that will be an eternal kingdom. And incidentally, the very fact that we have four kingdoms, that is the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and then this nondescript kingdom which turns out to be the Roman kingdom later on definitely from statements made in chapter nine, these four kingdoms evidently are to be regarded as in the hands of satan because the fifth kingdom is one that is taken away from the beasts and is given to the son of man and to the saints that are identified with him.

And so the implication is that the kingdoms of men are in the hands of the evil one. And you may remember, too, that the Apostle John in the fifth chapter of his first epistle says, "The whole world lays in the wicked one." So even to this present day, since the messianic kingdom has not come, this world lies by the direct determination of the Lord God, use permission if you want to, lies in the hands of Satan himself. He's the prince of the power of the air. He's the god of this age, the New Testament authors tell us.

Now, that doesn't satisfy Daniel. He wants to know more than the fact that there are going to be four kings, and four kingdoms, and that ultimately the kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High and it will be an eternal kingdom. He wants to know about that fourth kingdom and further details about it. And specifically, he wants to know about the little horn, concerning whom some personal things are said. He's going to be a blasphemer, he's going to be a persecutor of the people of God, and he is an individual who may be described as having eyes that speak of intelligence and wisdom.

So the angel will answer his second question and the answer begins in verse 19 and goes through verse 27. But in the answer that the angel gives and Daniel asks him, you'll notice that a lot is repeated but there are some things added. So in verse 19 we read,

"Then I (Daniel) desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, (the Aramaic word that is used here is the word that ordinarily or is usually associated with the idea of certainty. And that may be the sense, "then I desired to know the certainty of the fourth beast" but that doesn't make quite as good sense as some other possible census, and so ordinarily it is now translated by things like the exact meaning or the truth of the fourth beast. And Daniel continues) which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, (now that was left out in the beginning description of the vision) and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates."

And Daniel says, "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them (that is something added, that's not in the original description of the vision, that the little horn waged war with the saints and overpowered them) until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus he said: (now, the second answer in the fuller explanation is given by the angel. See Daniel's just repeating all that so that the angel will know where he is on the page, so to speak.) Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms (that's why it's nondescript) and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will

arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. And He will speak out against the Most High, he will wear (I want say wear out. We use it in that sense) wear out the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."

Let me stop for a moment and just make a few comments on what the angel says. In verse 23 we read that he says, "There will be a fourth kingdom, it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it."

Now, in describing the Medo-Persian Empire, Daniel has already said that that kingdom was one that devoured much but now, here is a kingdom that devours everything. And he speaks of the ten horns and it's very interesting, I think, and rather important for those who study that prophetic word to note that the ten horns are said to arise after the devouring of the earth.

Now, the Roman Empire is to be revived in this form. You'll have to take my word for that, but in Daniel chapter 9 and verse 26 you'll have the clue that makes the identification. So they arise after the devouring of the earth, the Roman Empire revived in this final form. And the ten kings rule at the same time for a time. That's very interesting and no doubt that's the reason why prophetic students look at the agreements that are made among the nations of the earth looking for evidences of things that might suggest we are nearing the time of which Daniel speaks.

We cannot speculate about that but we, at least, can say things like this. We do know there is such a thing as a Nine-Power Pact. We do know that there is such a thing as a Group of Ten that meet with reference to financial matters. We do know that the European Economic Community is an economic union of countries of Western Europe. It's rather significant. In other words, we may be able to see trends in our human society that suggest things that anticipate the final picture that is given us by the prophetic word.

We are told concerning this fourth horn, this little horn and who arises out of the ten horns that "he will be different from the previous ones and he will subdue three kings." That introduces, incidentally, a very human thing with reference to that individual because we learn from this that there will be dissension in that final ten kingdom Roman style of empire. One of them will rip up from the roots three others, conquering them, so there will be left seven.

We also learn some things about him. He is an individual who evidently, he had "eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts" and the suggestion is that he was an intellectual. That eliminates the Kennedys in case you wondering about them. [Laughter] And we do know that he was blasphemous and that probably eliminates Jimmy Carter regardless of all of his failures. One thing about Mr. Carter, so far as we know, he did not blaspheme. He did make a profession of faith in our Lord. This individual also is going to be an independent man who will even seek to make alterations in times and in law.

That's very interesting and biblical students have wondered about that. Is this a reference to the Law of Moses? In other words is there going to be some revision of the feasts of Israel and the Mosaic law? Or is this something that has to do with gentile kind of living? There is something in past history that might be compared with it. For example, we may have something like that that happened in the proceedings of the French revolutionaries who in 1793 in the French Revolution abolished Christianity and adopted in its stead the prostitute merit Goddess of Reason. With the institution of the new religion they deemed it in harmony with it to change weights and measures, and together with that they changed the divisions of time. They applied, incidentally, a decimal system to everything. As regards time, they made the year to begin with September 22nd and wished to divide it into ten months. They found, however, that they were unable to do that so they had to go back to the twelve-month system. But they did divide the months into three parts so that they were months of thirty days divided into three decades of days that were to take the place of the four weeks of the tenth day of each decade was set apart for rest. So

whether there was something like this, the prophet has in mind or God has in mind probably the prophet didn't understand all of this when it was given to him, or whether it's a reference to Israel, Israel's festivals, and the Law of Moses we have to, as in so many cases, say, "We don't really know."

He does say in verse 25, verse 27, and verse 18, that this kingdom that is to come is to be given to the saints. Now, the vision that he was first given, the kingdom was given to the son of man. Here it is stated, "It is to be given to the saints." That's no problem because the saints are the saints of the son of man and the union that exists between the son of man and the saints is suggested by this. It's going to be a difficult time for the saints for they are to be persecuted. He is to, "wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."

Now, it's possible to understand verse 25 in a slightly different way, "And they will be given into his for a time, times, and half a time," that could be a reference to the highest one. And he will intend to do this and "they", that is these times and laws, the change in law that he will institute will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

You have to be careful about antecedents. One of the things you learn in grammar is that pronouns of relative nature generally refer to the nearest antecedent otherwise you have confusion. You can see this in the funny papers. This past week I was also reading, in addition to Griswells, I was reading Nancy. And Nancy is sitting in a chair and she has got a piece of paper before like she's working out a problem. And the problem is this, "If you had six pieces of candy and three of your friends ask you to give each of them one, how many would you have left?" And she looks up from her paper, thinks, and then answers as she writes it down, "Friends or candy?" [Laughter] You have to be more explicit, "How many would you have left? How many pieces of candy would you have left or how many friends would you have left?"

Well, this day probably refers to the saints who are given into the hands of the little horn for the three and a half years, the last half of the great tribulation period that will come to pass on the earth. Judgment, however, will come and, "when the courts sit for judgment, dominion will be taken away from the little horn (the antichrist) and that dominion that he has will be destroyed forever."

"Then the sovereignty, and dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

So the kingdom is given to the saints by the Ancient of Days, and incidentally, you will notice that the kingdom is not given by them to the Lord God for we are not bringing in a kingdom. In the Protestant Church of the 20th Century, if you have grown up in such a Protestant Church as I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, the constant expression that I used to hear would be the expression that the church is bringing in the kingdom.

Now, if you were school in post-millennialism that would have been in harmony with it. The church is bringing the kingdom. But as you look, of course, at the word of God it is not the saints who bring in the kingdom, it's God who gives the kingdom to the saints and that is an entirely different thing. If you read the second chapter you'll find the same thing and again the identification of the Son of God with them. What a magnificent vision this is, Daniel certainly had great dreams and vision so different from mine. This past week I've had several dreams.

Now, I went out to the golf range and hit a few golf balls during the week. And then I read in the papers about the San Francisco earthquake and then one afternoon Martha said that she was going shopping. Now, you would think that a lady that was going shopping wouldn't spend the whole afternoon. [Laughter] I made reference to it when she returned home and one of her friends who was with her called me on the

telephone and said, "Before you married her I used to come into town and we'd shop the whole day." [Laughter] That was designed to comfort me, I gathered.

But at any rate, I had a dream and so I had a dream. And what do you think my dream is? Well, I was in San Francisco and, of course, I didn't know anything about the earthquake in my dream, but I was walking the streets of San Francisco while she was shopping. And I walked, and walked, and walked. I went in several stores. I couldn't find her at all. But guess what I was walking with? With a golf club in my hand.

[Laughter] So the streets of San Francisco, I was walking up and down them amidst all of the crowds holding a golf club in my hand looking for Martha. Now that's the kind of dream I have. [Laughter] Obviously, I'm not of the quality and standard of the prophets of the word of God. I haven't figured out yet what that dream really means, fundamentally, and I'm not planning on writing that down, incidentally.

When Daniel finished his dream, it's surprising, I think, to read that he says, "As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself." You wonder at Daniel's response. I'm going to suggest the reason why. I'm not sure. It's not stated specifically. So, I'm just making this suggestion. Daniel knew from Jeremiah, later on he says he studied Jeremiah, and he knew when the captivity of seventy years would end. He was now well on to the finish of the captivity, fifteen to twenty years left, when this great vision is given to him. But Daniel knew that when the captivity would end, the people of God would come back into the land. And he anticipated, perhaps, that the prophecies and the promises that were made to them would be fulfilled, after that, the discipline or the chastisement being over.

But now he is told that there is going to arise not simply one kingdom after the Babylonian kingdom, which he has identified and the kingdom under which he was living, but three kingdoms, and the final one a worldwide kingdom within the short period of time from the present day and Israel's return from the captivity. So it's obvious that he was confused and to think that there would be these great international upheavals,

one touching the whole of the earth in this short period of time. And furthermore, that the people of God would be worn out by the little horn, persecuted, driven from pillar to post, was enough to alarm the prophet. I think I can understand then why he says he was greatly alarmed, his face grew pale and he had even concern about the interpretation itself since it seemed so terrible to think that all of this would happen in such a short time.

At any rate that may be the explanation of why he wrote as he did. In the next chapter he has the same response when the details of the struggle between the Medo-Persian Empire and the Grecian are given in chapter 8. He concludes by saying in the last verse of that chapter, "Then I, Daniel, was exhausted (or done in) and sick for days, Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it."

So let me sum up for our time is gone. What we have sought to do simply and fundamentally is to explain something of the background of the beasts that will we read about in chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation. You can certainly see from this that the nation Israel has a glorious future but after great troubles. The news from Israel bears that out. If you read what's happening in the Nation Israel today you know that it is a beleaguered nation surround by mortal enemies anxious to wipe Israel from the face of the earth and drive them into the sea. And what is most discouraging for many Christians and for Christians living in the land of Israel, is that they have noticed in recent decades that even fellow Christians have lost some of their high regard for the nation Israel and do not seem disturbed at all at the prospect that the Arabs might ultimately overwhelm them. The news from Israel is not good, but of course, the word of God is something different.

Another thing we learn is that the messianic kingdom cannot begin until after the times of the Gentiles close. That's very evident for people who tell us that the messianic kingdom is in existence now in the sense in which Daniel sets it forth. You can be sure that's not true because that kingdom in it's fullest since, that is in a kingdom that is

manifested and appears in the life of the people of this globe that has not yet come to pass. It will not begin until after the times of the Gentiles closes, chapter 2 and chapter 7 both make that extremely plain.

I was reading, this week, a sermon by an old expositor of Scripture, a very very capable man. It really was not so much a sermon as a lecture in which he gave it a theological seminary in Pennsylvania. And in the course of it he made reference to christocentric theology. He went on to object to it a little bit and he introduced his objection in this way. He said, "When Stephen was carrying on his ministry, Stephen said that as a result of the ministry of the son of man, what would happen would be that the temple would be destroyed and the law as those individuals (with whom he was speaking) would be done away." You may remember in the end of chapter 6 we read, "And they put forth false witness who said, 'this man incessantly speaks against this holy temple and the law,' for we have heard him say, 'This Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy the place and alter the customs which Moses has handed down to us. And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the counsel saw his face like the face of an angel.'"

Now, the high priests said a very significant thing, so my expositor said. We read in chapter 7 verse 1, "And the high priest said, 'Are these things so?'" That's what we really are concerned with when we come to the word of God, "Are these things so?"

Now, for various reasons, and primarily the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit ultimately, Christians believe that the things that are set forth in the word of God are so. But we sometimes have people today say, "We're not so interested so much in what the Bible says as we are in Christ." Christocentric theology is the kind of theology we ought to be concerned about and the theology that gathers around the Bible is somehow inadequate. I don't deny that our theology should be Christocentric, after all, Christ is the ultimate revealer of God. And so, we must have a Christocentric theology. Our Lord supports that idea or that line of theology and the whole of the Bible supports it. But I

simply ask you this question, what knowledge of Christ do we have that is not found in the Bible?

In other words, what we know of Jesus Christ we know from the Bible, from the word of God. So it's not a question of either the Bible or christocentric theology, but it's a question of both. We have the Bible, which is the revelation of God inspired of God the Holy Spirit, which tells us of the christocentric ministry of the Lord God, our triune God in heaven. So, are these things so is a very important question for all of us to think about. Well, the times of the Gentiles run on, fortunately for us, we still live in the time of the Gentiles and therefore since the times of the Gentiles still run on salvation is still open to those who abandon works for grace. In what is your trust?

Yesterday I had a knock at my front door. Two people met me at the front door. It was obvious from the first question and even from the looks on their faces that I had to do with some witness, Jehovah's Witnesses. The first question that was asked me was, "Do you believe in hell?" And I said, "Yes, I do believe in hell." "You mean to say you really believe in hell? You believe that a loving God would be responsible for the eternal torment of individuals?" I said, "The term 'hell' or 'gehenna' is used thirteen times, I think, in the New Testament [Laughter] and in every case but one it is used by our Lord." Incidentally, you smile but it made no impression on them. [Laughter] I said, "The one time it's not found on the lips of our Lord, it's found in James chapter 3." It had no effect upon them. Their theology was not grounded in the word of God.

And later on they cited a text and the text was not found in the Bible at that point and there great frustration and confusion on the face of the lady involved, she had a young, nice looking young man with her but he was just listening. And great confusion was there, and in order to find it she had to pull out another little book, which is really where their trust lies, one of their books used to explain the Bible. We had an interesting time. Ephesians two eight, nine, and ten is very useful for people who keep insisting faith without works is dead, with which all Christians agree, but also that we're saved by

grace through faith. And consequently, since the times of the Gentiles are still running on, those who abandon works for grace, the grace of God, and the gift of the Lord Jesus who offered the satisfaction for sins through which we may have eternal life. They find the experience that really satisfies that hearts of men and women who are sinners.

If you're here today and you've never believed in our Lord, we encourage you to look at yourself, first of all, and to see that you have in your life offended a holy God, that you're a sinner. You abide under guilt and condemnation and that the Scripture say that Christ has died for the sins of sinners and offers eternal life to those who come to him and rest themselves in what he has done. So come to Christ. Rest for time and eternity, your destiny, upon our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished. Give yourself into his hands and you shall know the joy of the forgiveness of sins and the possession of life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to thee for these great prophecies, so remarkable, so filled with significance, so worthy of our deepest and closest attention. And we thank thee for the clear teaching that forgiveness of sins, righteousness, a righteousness that satisfies God is offered by heaven to sinners.

And Lord if there is some here who sense their need, knowing their guilt and condemnation, through the Holy Spirit cause them at this very moment to turn to thee, acknowledge their need and rest in thee and in Christ for time and eternity.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.