



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 21:33–46; Isaiah 5:1–7

Gospel of Matthew

“Jesus and the Problem of Israel’s Unbelief”

TRANSCRIPT

In the Scripture reading for this morning from Mathew chapter 21, we have reference to a passage in Isaiah chapter 5, and in order for us to get a better picture of the message that follows and the things that our Lord says in Matthew 21, I am going to read the verses from Isaiah chapter 5 verse 1 through 7 that pertain to the parable that the Lord Jesus tells in Matthew 21. So if you have a Bible with you, and I hope you do, will you turn with me first to Isaiah chapter 5. I want to read verses 1 through 7, and then we will turn over to Matthew chapter 21 and verse 33 and conclude our exposition of that 21st chapter. Isaiah chapter 5 verses 1 through 7.

“Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he dug it and gathered out the stones thereof and planted it with the choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge and it shall be eaten up; and break down its wall and it shall be trampled down. And I will lay it waste: it

shall not be pruned, nor digged nor shall there come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

Now I want you to turn over to Matthew 21:33 and will you notice, as we read the section which contains the parable of the householder, our Lord leans upon that section in Isaiah chapter 5 in telling the parable. And I think also we will notice that there are certain things from that incident in Isaiah that will enable us to understand the parable that he tells in Matthew chapter 21. Beginning now in verse 33:

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and leased it to tenant farmers (now that’s a new item as you can tell from the comparison of the two accounts) and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near he sent his servants to the farmers that they might receive the fruits of it. And the farmers took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did the same unto them. But last of all he sent unto them his son saying they will reverence my son. But when the farmers saw the son they said among themselves this is the heir come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh what will he do unto those farmers. They say unto him he will miserably destroy those wicked men and will lease his vineyard unto other farmers who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore say I unto you. (Here is

our Lord’s application of the parable that he has told and the Scripture that he has just cited.) The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.’ And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them, but when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude because they took him for a prophet.”

May the Lord bless this reading from his Word.

Our subject for this morning in the exposition of the Gospel of Matthew is “Jesus and the Problem of Israel’s Unbelief.” From ancient times, from Thales, the first recorded western philosopher, to Freud, the last of the great classical philosophers of history, men have been groping for an understanding of ultimate reality. The Germans call it a search for *weltanschauung*, or a worldview. And 20th century man has pantingly joined the search, but the history of the human race is still a riddle to him. James Joyce said, “History is a nightmare from which I’m seeking to escape,” and Henry Ford, who was not known for a great deal of intellectual accomplishment said, “History is bunk.”

One of the reasons that the great philosophers and the great inventors have not found the clue to history is that they have disregarded one of the most significant features of human history, and that is the history of Israel. The history of Israel is a perplexing history, there is no question about it, but it is vividly significant. Adolph Schafer, a Christian believer of Jewish parentage of a generation or so ago, said, “The history of Israel is the history of a miracle even as it is the miracle of history, and it is a rather surprising thing, I think, that our philosophers of history have neglected the history of Israel.

One sage who was called Die [indistinct] die Nordens, or the Sage of the North, a philosopher by the name of Hamann of Konigsberg, Germany, said [to m??], “The wonder of all

wonders and the most unmistakable truth of a divine providence and rule, a miracle greater than Noah’s Ark, or Lott’s wife, or the burning bush, is the Jew.

Some years ago I remember a reading a book by Bruce Mazlish of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was a book entitled, *The Riddle of History*, and in the course of the chapters of the book Professor Mazlish sought to interpret the views of history of some of the great men of the history of human history.

He had chapters on men like Vico and Voltaire and Spengler and Condorsey and Kant and Hagel and Comte and others of that kind, but as I read through the book—I remember reading through it particularly because I read through it when I was sick one Christmas holiday—I read threw the book and I noticed that there was an amazing omission of the nation of Israel and the Jew in the philosophies of history of these important men. Finally I did notice one or two references to Israel within in it, but I became so impressed with the omission of any history of the nation Israel that I looked in the back in order to see if there other references that I had omitted. And in the index of the book there was no reference whatsoever to Israel or the Jews, yet these men were seeking to interpret human history.

I do not think that you can interpret human history properly without an understanding of the nation Israel. Israel is like a lonely river in the midst of an ocean of mankind, a kind of gulf stream which mingles with the rest of the waters of the ocean but nevertheless is not really a part until finally it joins the North American drift, and in the eyes of many is responsible for the warming of western Europe. Israel is like that.

Israel is just as strange if you and I were crossing the Atlantic on a large steamship, and we are to take a bottle of water and pour it out on the ocean and were able to see the waters, and if we were to look and see that the drops of water that we poured on the Atlantic Ocean stayed separate from all the other drops of water in the ocean, Israel is just as amazing as that fact would be.

The Bible tells us very plainly concerning Israel that Israel is distinct from the nations of the earth. In the Old Testament in the 23rd chapter of the book of Numbers, Balaam, the ungodly

heathen prophet whose mouth was nevertheless controlled of the Holy Spirit, spoke of Israel as, “A people dwelling alone and not reckoned among the nations.” So if we do not understand the history of Israel, we do not understand the history of the human race, and we do not understand the history of us who are Gentiles.

Now in this parable that the Lord Jesus tells, we have an interesting insight into the history of Israel, and I think we also have an interesting insight into the history of the Gentiles at the present time. I think that a great deal of light is shed on the subject of the history of the nations by this parable of the rejection of the son told by the Lord Jesus himself. Let’s look now at the parable in Matthew 21 verse 33 through verse 39, and as you gathered from the reading of the Scripture, in which I read with you from Isaiah chapter 5 verse 1 through 7, the background of this story that was told by the Lord Jesus is Isaiah chapter 5.

We are told sometimes by students of the parables that we should never look for more than one point in a parable. We should always look for one central point and that is all, but I think anyone reading this parable will come to the conviction very quickly that there is a great deal more than simply one point in this parable. We have some very clear identifications that are made, not only by the Lord Jesus in his interpretation, but by comparison of that passage in the Old Testament in Isaiah chapter 5.

The owner of the vineyard is surely designed to represent God for example, and the vineyard in the light of Isaiah chapter 5:7, is clearly the nation Israel. But Israel is looked at as king of a theocratic nation, a proprietor of the kingdom of God, and the husbandman, which is a new element introduced by the Lord Jesus in his account of this particular parable, are the leaders in Israel.

Incidentally, when this parable is told by Mark in his Gospel, the husbandman represents the people, and in Matthew the husbandman represents the leaders of the people, but there is no problem, because just as the Old Testament prophets say “like priest, like people” so the people of Israel were moved and directed and followed their leaders, and so their leaders were the same as the people and the people the same as the leaders. Incidentally, that is why, when the Lord Jesus was

crucified under the direction of the leaders, we blame the nation as well as the Gentiles, of course, but we blame the nation as a whole because the people followed their leaders.

The husbandman—the sharecroppers, the tenant farmers—this element is something the Lord Jesus himself introduces and in that sense he advances the story of Isaiah and says to us that it is true Israel is the vineyard but the sharecroppers the tenant farmers are designed to represent the leaders in Israel.

Now this was a very common thing in Israel, to plant a vineyard, and all of the things that are given to us by the Lord Jesus in this parable are true to life. It was common for the vineyard to be hedged about with a kind of brier or thorny hedge. Now the hedge was designed to keep wild boars out and also to keep thieves out. It was customary in the planting of the vineyard to build a winepress, and the winepress was usually composed of a trough, honed out of rock or else built, and then another trough a little lower with a channel connecting the two so that when the grapes were mashed in the upper trough, the juice from the grapes would flow down into the lower trough, and it was from the lower trough that the wine was derived.

It was also customary to build a tower in the midst of the vineyard, for the tower was designed to be a place for those who rented or planted the vineyard or tilled the vineyard could watch the enemies—the thieves, the possible thieves—and also it provided a place for lodging for those who worked for the owner of the vineyard. So the whole story was a story that was true to life, and the Lord Jesus tells it as an illustration of spiritual truth, and I think that we are justified as we read through it in making a few applications.

He speaks about a certain householder who plants this vineyard, who hedges it about, who builds a winepress in it, who also constructs a tower, who leases it to tenant farmers, and then he himself goes into a far country. That, too, incidentally, was true because Palestine was a very difficult land at this time, and it was not uncommon for people who owned tracts of land in Palestine to lease their property out to sharecroppers or tenant farmers and then to go into a more peaceful land. That is the picture here, and so that is what happened and the owner of the land went into a far country.

It is obviously designed to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in how he has come to carry out a ministry in following out the Father’s will. I think that ultimately what was designed to be represented by this was the covenant that God made with Israel in the days of Abraham. There were beautifully miraculous things that were accomplished through Abraham, and then through Moses, when God brought Israel into the land, and then it seemed as if God had left Israel, in the sense that he was performing daily miracles and ascended to heaven to stay in his place there. Occasionally he came in the sending of the prophets in the Old Testament, but generally speaking, the miracles that accompanied the foundation of the nation Israel ceased thereafter.

So when our Lord tells the story of the husbandman who goes into the far country, it’s beautifully suggestive of a rich, invisible God who has called Israel into divine election has planted them in the land, has given them all the blessings that he could possibly shower upon them, and then expects from them in response to his rich outpouring of blessing upon them that they would serve him in holiness and glad obedience.

Now that is not too much to expect. It would seem a great God who has called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans, has brought him into the land, has given him these great unconditional promises, then has brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt, later into the land, given them all of the blessings of the land—it’s not too much to expect that Israel should yield him holiness and glad obedience is it? That would not be too much to expect.

Incidentally, that kind of thing is the kind of thing God expects of us to whom he has brought out of the bondage of sin and into the freedom of the salvation of the Lord Jesus. It’s not too much to expect that we should serve him in holiness and in glad obedience is it? Well that’s the picture.

And then when the time of the fruit comes, the Lord Jesus said that this rich invisible God sent his servants to the farmers, to the sharecroppers that they might receive the truth of it. Now you would expect that the sharecroppers or the tenants, having been blessed with the provision of sharing in the wealth of the owner of the vineyard, would have been glad to share the things that they

had. But when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the farmers that they might receive the fruit from it, and the farmers took his servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another.

Now one doesn’t have to read the Old Testament much to know that which the Lord Jesus is speaking. For example, they beat Jeremiah the prophet. They killed Isaiah, sawing him asunder. They stoned Zechariah the prophet, so the Lord Jesus is just telling us here a beautiful story of the Old Testament. It is sometimes said that Israel, the nation, had a natural genius for religion, just like the Greeks had a natural genius for human thought and art and the Romans for law and order, but the striking thing about the history of Israel is that they had one penchant which they never seemed to get over, and that was the penchant for persecuting the prophets.

Never has there been a nation who persecuted prophets sent by God to them as the nation Israel. Age after age they respond in the same way: they persecute the prophets. They stoned them, they beat them, they sawed them asunder. All of the prophets experienced this persecution from the people of God. That is one thing that is characteristic of the nation of Israel. It is the way they treated the prophets.

Well, finally, the father, or the owner—the father in our Lord’s thought—the owner of the vineyard, seeing that his servants do no good with the tenant farmers after he had sent more than the first—and you can think of Elijah and the days of their ministry and how they were treated. He sent other servants more than the first. They did the same to them, and last of all the Lord Jesus, in telling the story, says he sent unto them his son, saying they will reverence by son. Mark puts this even more vividly. He says that he finally decided he would send, he still had one son—a beloved son—and he would send him.

Now there are two things that we ought to notice about this. In the first place, this is the sad, tragic side of the parable that the father, or the owner of the vineyard, having sent all of his savants to this point and having them all stoned and maltreated, finally decides that he will send his son with the sense that they will reverence my son. Now that let’s us know, of course, it is only a parable



because God the Father knew surely the response that the people would give when the Lord Jesus was sent, but it is a rather sad, tragic thing that you can see in the heart of God—this expression of, surely they will reference by son. It is expressive of the compassion of a great and loving God.

But there is something else here I think that is most interesting. Now the Lord Jesus is telling this parable and after he has said that the husbandman has sent the servants and more servants, he finally says that he sends his son. Now it is evident from the telling of this parable that in the light of the context here, the Lord Jesus regards the husbandman as God, and he regards the servants as the prophets, but he regards the son as himself. He is interpreting this in his own words as meaning, I am the son of the owner of the vineyard. Now in the Isaiah story as well as here, it is intended that the husbandman that is the owner should represent the father, so this is a magnificent claim on the part of the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God. He is more than a prophet. It is evident he does not consider himself to be one of the prophets; he is more than a prophet. He is truly the unique son of God.

Now it is evident then from this that if anyone who says that, well, the Lord Jesus is just a kind of prophet who was a little better than the other prophets, has woefully misunderstood the teaching of the Holy Scripture concerning the son of God. And let me also say this, that if the Lord Jesus is not what he said that he was, then we cannot follow his teaching. It is foolish for us to even open the Scriptures.

I read yesterday or the day before in the *Dallas Morning News* a little, very brief letter that someone had written into the news. It was concerning some public issue, I think as I remember. It was the issue of homosexuality, and the person wrote a very brief little note something like this: if the Bible is correct, if the Bible is the Word of God, then homosexuality is a sin, but if the Bible is not the Word of God then anything goes. It was very beautiful, very sincere and very true. If the revelation that we hold before us is the revelation of God, then we have some divine instruction. We have some sure resting place for faith and life. But if we do not have an inspired revelation from God

in Holy Scripture, then anything does go, because human reason prevails. And we cannot know anything through human reason and consequently anything goes. We cannot be sure of anything.

Now the Lord Jesus, then, in telling the parable of the husbandman, pictures himself as the son and gives himself that exalted place of dignity. And if it’s true, then, we must bow before the Son of God. But if it is not true, then there is no reason for us to come to Believers Chapel. There is no reason for us to come to any religious organization or any religious building because it is all nonsense. It is all the product of human thought and reason and therefore it is utterly without authority for us.

Well you might think that they would respond to the son of the husbandman, but the tenant farmers have greater insight than to give the thing over to him. Incidentally when he says, last of all he sent unto him his son, he expresses the fact that the Son of God is God’s final revelation. He’s the last quiver from God’s arrow. He’s God’s last appeal. There is no other appeal to men than the Son of God, and for over nineteen hundred years now, God has been appealing to men through the revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no other appeal. It is true the Lord Jesus Christ is the last quiver, the last arrow in God’s quiver, and if we do not respond to him there is no other response possible.

Now we read in verse 38, “But when the farmers saw the son, they said among themselves this is the heir. Let’s kill him and let’s seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and what a striking picture it is. They cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. Now how true to Scripture that is, because we read later on in the Gospel of Matthew that when they do seize upon the son, they first of all take him outside the city, outside the camp. The writer of the Epistle of Hebrews lays some stress upon this, stressing the fact that when the Lord Jesus was crucified, he was crucified by the religious leaders outside the camp, and if we want to be in identification with him, we must go outside the camp to unite with him. That is, we must go outside of organized religion in the days of the Lord Jesus to find him. So they threw him outside the city and there they slew him.

Now then, there is one other thing I should have mentioned here. You see, not only does our Lord know his own dignity, but he knows too that he is going to die. That is, he knows about his atoning sacrifice. He knows all about this penal substitution that he shall offer long before it takes place.

Now then having told this remarkable parable to the leaders, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus addresses an appeal to them, very much as I, in seeking to preach the Word of God, should suddenly stop and ask you something. So he turned and he asks them a question, and incidentally in those days, particularly in the East, when questions were asked of the audience by speakers, they replied to rhetorical questions. I think we would be shocked; at least I would be shocked, probably. But nevertheless, they replied, and so when he asked, when the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh what will he do unto those farmers.

Now this question was designed to make them the jury and the judge, and evidently the solemn earnestness of the Lord Jesus, as he told this parable, lay such a spell upon them that they replied condemning themselves. They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men and will lease his vineyard unto other farmers who shall render to him the fruit in their seasons. Now I think in comparing the accounts that this was the reply of the people who were gathered about, and now specifically the leaders—they were mingled together evidently—so such a spell had been laid upon them that the spontaneously utter a verdict that condemned them.

And in the original text in which our Lord used, there is a play on words that stresses this. You could render it something like this: he will bring those, he said he will bring those bad men to a bad end, or he will miserably destroy those miserable men. It’s very vivid, and he will lease his vineyard unto other farmers who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. That was the natural reply. Those men are miserable. They are disobedient. They have not rendered to him the fruits that the owner should have expected, so he will take it away from them, and he will give it to others who will do the job right.

Now the Lord Jesus, after they replied this way—incidentally, the leaders in the Markan account say, O may it not come to be, because they recognized that he was speaking about them, and so they utter this, O may it not come to be—but having heard their reply then, the Lord Jesus recites the passage from the Old Testament linking everything with the teaching of the Word of God.

It’s evident that if the Lord Jesus had answered our letter-writer who wrote in to the *Dallas Morning News*, he would have said, but the Scriptures are the Word of God. Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read in the Scripture the stone which the builders rejected? The same has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

And he refers back to Psalm 118. In a passage from that particular Psalm, in which I think the scene is the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian captivity, and there in the building of the temple there is pictured a scene in which, as they were constructing this little temple, evidently they came to a stone which had been brought up from the quarry, and that stone was not properly able to be put into a specific part of the temple, and so the temple builders laid it aside. There is an old story evidently which is tradition to this effect, and then as the temple building reached it’s completion, they needed a stone for the topmost stone, the capstone, and someone remembered the stone that was over in the bushes, and they went over and they took this out and miraculously, so the tradition goes, miraculously this stone just exactly fit into the top of the building and became the capstone or the top stone of the corner. Now all of that may or may not be true, but the point of the Psalm is as the Lord Jesus says, the stone which the builders rejected; the same has become the head of the corner.

In other words, there is a reversal. Now one doesn’t have to study the Bible to know that the term stone is a figure that is used of the Lord Jesus, and in the book of Isaiah as well as in the book of Daniel, the Lord Jesus is referred to as “the stone” and so here the point is that he is the stone, and the builders who are constructing the temples, the leaders in Israel who are supposedly carrying out messianic activities in their teaching and in their worship in Israel—at this time they are supposedly building the temple—have rejected him. But that stone that they reject is going to be the

headstone of the corner. In other words, the one of whom the kingdom of God shall be built. And again, we notice our Lord in his own understanding of things regards himself as the one upon whom the kingdom of God shall ultimately be constructed. He is the foundation of the kingdom. And furthermore, it’s futile to fight against it, so he tells us.

Now having given us that passage from Holy Scripture, he turns to interpret the parable that he has given, and then also he will apply that particular Scripture. But first, he interprets the parable. Therefore, verse 43, therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you. Now you can see from this that the vineyard is the kingdom of God. The vineyard shall be taken from the tenants and shall be given to others. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it.

Ah, but what is the meaning of the term, nation? The kingdom of God shall be taken from Israel, but shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruit of it. There have been two different viewpoints with regard to the interpretation of that word, nation, here, and as you can see it is an important clue to the understanding of our Lord’s parable. Some have said the nation to whom the kingdom of God shall be given is the nation of Israel which shall be on the earth in the future, just before the time of our Lord’s second advent, so the kingdom of God shall be taken from you—you Jewish people who are here upon the earth now; the generation that is here when the Lord is here—and shall be given to a generation in the future that shall be on the earth when the Lord Jesus returns at his Second Advent. To them he kingdom of God shall be given, and the messianic kingdom shall be the fulfillment of this.

The only difficulty with that interpretation is that the term of nation, here, is a term that, while it does refer to Israel in the other books of the New Testament rarely, never refers to the nation of Israel in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew has used a term a number of times in the Gospel up to this point for generation. It’s the term, *genea*. But *ethnos*, for which we get the English word, ethnic national, is the term that is used here. So it seems to me unlikely this is an unlikely an interpretation.

But what then is the nation to whom the kingdom of God shall be given? Well now, in the apostle Paul’s teaching in Romans chapter 11, he tells a story about an olive tree. He speaks about an olive tree, and he identifies that with the promises that God made to Abraham. He said that there is a time, however, when the natural branches of the olive tree are broken off, and he likens that to the rejection of the nation Israel in the present day. He said also that unnatural branches are grafted into it, which he identifies in the context as the Gentiles, and speaks of today as the day of Gentile salvation. The picture is the same picture that we have here.

So it seems to me that what our Lord is saying when he says the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, he’s referring to what we call the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what does he mean when he says, the kingdom of God shall be taken from them? After all, wasn’t it the kingdom of God? Yes, it was the kingdom of God. So what was Israel’s privilege?

Well Israel had the sacred theocratic stewardship of the kingdom. They were given a mission by God, and their mission was to give testimony to him. Their mission was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and through the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, the people of God would be gathered in—that was their mission. In other words their mission was that of stewardship. So when he says the kingdom of God shall be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits, he is saying that the stewardship of the kingdom shall be taken from the nation Israel, and the stewardship of the kingdom shall be given to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that’s an amazing thing, but that’s truth, and we have seen it come to pass that the church in the present day is the steward of the kingdom of God. It is our responsibility to witness to him. All of the teaching of the book of Acts communicates that truth: that it is the work of the church of the Lord Jesus to give testimony to the saving work of the Lord Jesus, to so preach the Word that the Holy Spirit may, through the preaching of the Word, gather his own to himself.

Now someone might say, well, that seems to suggest that God is just going to carry out his plan, and if Jesus Christ must have his people then why should we preach? Because this parable

implies that God is going to accomplish his purposes. Now this is the twisted, thwarted kind of reasoning that the natural man reasons. He says, if it’s so certain to come to pass, then why should we do anything about it?

Why my dear Christian friends, that’s the reason why we do things about it. If we had the sense that we could not accomplish this except through our own activity, which we know to be so weak and failing, we should be so disappointed and defeated we would accomplish nothing. The very fact that God has given us the promise that he will do his will through us is the thing that keeps us going and encourages us to preach the Word of God. It is the assurance of the fact that God will accomplish his purpose that is the encouragement of the preacher of the Word of God.

I, for one, would not be here preaching the Word of God were it not for the fact I know that through that preaching God is going to accomplish his purpose. If it depended upon me, I’m sorry. I would have to confess I should have no hope that you or anyone else should ever respond to the message concerning the Lord Jesus. Now some people think of our Lord Jesus as a kind of sweet, namby pamby kind of person who gives us all these great promises, and we can take them or not, and if we don’t take them, everything is going to be fairly good. If we take them, it will be just a little better.

But I want you to notice how he interprets the reference to the stone in verse 44, “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken.” Well, that’s what the Pharisees and the scribes have done. They have fallen on the stone, and they are being broken because they are refusing to respond to him. But then he says, “On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Now here he alludes to a passage in the book of Daniel. In the 2nd chapter, in which Daniel gives us a picture of the entire age of the times of the Gentiles, he says, Daniel does, as he describes the climax of the age, he sees a stone cut out, cut out without hands, that falls upon the image that is made of gold and silver and bronze and iron and clay, and he sees that stone that has come out without hands—that supernatural stone representative of the Lord Jesus—smite that great image of Nebuchadnezzar and so destroy it that nothing is left but the chaff, which is blown to the winds like

the dust of the summer floors where the chaff was found. In other words, utter destruction. And it is striking that the very word that is used in Daniel 2:44 is the word that is used here: it will grind him to powder. He refers to the Second Advent and warns that if we do not respond to the ministry of the gospel in the present age, there is coming a time when the enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be utterly destroyed. It’s a fearful ending. And the Pharisees perceived that he spoke of them.

Let me conclude by just saying this. This parable is a beautiful parable that tells us of the dignity of the Son of God. He told the parable, and if he’s wrong in calling himself the son, he’s infinitely wrong. No other founders of any other religions have ever called themselves the Son of God. The Lord Jesus made this astounding claim, and if he’s wrong he’s infinitely wrong but if he is right we must bow before him.

I began by saying that we do not understand human history if we do not understand the history of Israel, that lonely river in the midst of mankind. Her history, the story of her election, the story of her divine blessing, the story of her rejection of the Son, the story of her scattering to the four corners of the earth at the present time, and the story of her restoration to her blessing in the last days, is the clue to the understanding of history. And if we do not understand that, we shall never understand human history. But in understanding it, we shall understand human history, and we shall understand how it plays within it.

We are living in the day in which the church of Jesus Christ, the true church, has been given the privilege of stewardship of the kingdom, and we proclaim the gospel of the son of God who loved us and loosed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us on the cross at Calvary. If you’re here this morning, and you have never responded to that gospel, we appeal to you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus to recognize your own sinful condition to recognize the exalted character of the son of God and the greatness of the atoning work that he has accomplished, and within your heart receive him as your own savior. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] We look forward, Lord, to the day when the ransomed of Israel and the ransomed of the church of Jesus Christ shall enter into the kingdom of God upon the earth with joy and



singing. In the meantime, O God, enable us to be faithful to our stewardship of the preaching of the Word of God. We know, Lord, that according to Holy Scripture that the church as a whole shall fail. We see the failure in the ruins all about us, but O God we do pray that Thou bless the ministry of the Word through faithful men accomplish thy purposes to the glory of the Son whose we are and whom we serve.

Now may grace, mercy, and peace be with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.