



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 28

“The Covenant with Death and the Sure Foundation”      TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word of God. We ask now for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we consider again these great chapters in the Prophecy of Isaiah. We regret Lord that so often we have neglected these portions of Thy word and we pray that as we ponder them and reflect upon them in our studies together each Monday night that the word of God may grip us and speak to us. We pray that Thou will give us understanding of the ancient figures of speech and modes of thought and understanding concerning the customs of that time, so that we may understand the message which Thou hast for men and for us. We commit each one present here to Thee for Thy blessing in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now tonight we are turning to the 28th chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah to begin our spring series in this book. Now we covered I think a considerable portion of the book, 27 chapters in the fall and that is very good. I realize we did not cover all of the details of the prophecy, but then that would take us many, many months. It is very important that we read these sections such as the Prophecy of Isaiah and unfortunately they are neglected in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The subject for tonight is the first in a little series within a series, the Book of Woes, or “The Covenant with Death and the Sure Foundation.” Our next five studies which cover chapters 28 through 33 take us into the reign of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah began to rule in 727 or perhaps 729 B.C. He was co-regent with King Ahaz until 716 when he became sole king of Judea. He was one of Judah’s greatest kings and I would like for you to turn with me to 2 Kings chapter 18 and verse 5, and let’s read the account that is given there of King Hezekiah. 2 Kings chapter 18 and verse 5. Later on in the Prophecy of Isaiah, we are going to consider one of the great sections of Hezekiah’s life and so we won’t say much tonight, but I do want you to notice what the Scripture states regarding him in 2 Kings chapter 18 and verse 5. “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.”

Now this is a very, very remarkable statement. Hezekiah was one of the greatest of the kings of Israel and now we are coming into that portion of the Prophecy of Isaiah in which King Hezekiah has a leading part. You’ll remember that during the reign of King Ahaz, Judea’s or Judah’s problems were with the alliance between Syria and Ephraim, the northern kingdom. Remember the two kingdoms had split some years before and the northern kingdom Ephraim had united in alliance with the kingdom of Syria and had sought to take the little kingdom of Judah.

Now in the course of defending himself and themselves against this Syro-Ephraimitic alliance, King Ahaz had appealed to Assyria for help. Now remember he appealed to Assyria for help against the advice of the Prophet Isaiah because for the kings of Judah to appeal to a heathen king for help and protection was a denial of the theocracy. It was a denial of the great promises that God had given to that nation and particularly to the throne of Judah, for He had promised that throne everlasting dominion and that He would be with them. But Ahaz, because he was Mr. King No Faith, turned to Assyria and in turning to Assyria, he disobeyed God.

Now the result of this was that Assyria came into dominance in that part of the ancient world. As is always I think the case when we seek contrary to the will of God to lean on the arm of the flesh, frequently the very thing that we turn for help becomes the thing that actually defeats us, and so now as a result of Ahaz’s turn to Assyria, Assyria has become the great enemy of the kingdom of Judah and of Ephraim. In 722 B.C. the kingdom of Assyria finally overcame the northern kingdom. And Isaiah chapter 28 is probably set just a year or two after King Hezekiah came to the throne, that is Samaria or the northern kingdom is to yet overthrown but they are on the verge of it.

And so the problem that Judah has now is with Assyria. Instead of appealing to the Lord, Hezekiah in the early part of his reign was deeply influenced by a party within Judah who wanted them to turn to Egypt for help and this Egyptianizing policy if I may call it that, became the thing that Isaiah directed his prophecies against. So the same thing was going on that had gone on during the reign of Ahaz. Instead of leaning on the Lord, they had turned to Assyria for help against Syria and Ephraim.

And now when Assyria is threatening them, instead of turning to the Lord God, they want to turn to Egypt. So these chapters beginning at chapter 28 and going on through chapter 33 which are the Book of Woes are written in the light of that Egyptianizing policy, and you are going to see as we go along that this influence of the group in Judah that wanted to make an alliance with Egypt grows and grows until finally an alliance is formed. Now Isaiah will prophesy against that, for he says it is vain to trust in horses and chariots and it's vain to go down to Egypt for help.

Now these prophecies, chapter 28 through chapter 33, are characterized by the occurrence of the word woe. I want you to notice now the places. Look at chapter 28 verse 1. “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower.” Then notice chapter 29 and verse 1. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!” That's another name for Jerusalem. Then chapter 29 and verse 15.

“Woe unto those who seek deeply to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?” To imagine that you can carry on your human activity in such a way that God cannot see it, that woe is directed to that. Verse 1 of chapter 30. “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, who take counsel, but not of me; and who cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.” Chapter 31 verse 1. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help; and rely on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!” And then a woe in chapter 33 and verse 1 concludes the series of the Book of Woes. This one is directed against Assyria itself. “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled.” So here then in these prophecies, we have the Book of Woes.

Now we had the Book of Immanuel remember in Isaiah chapter 7 through chapter 12. Here the Book of Woes, someone has called it also the Book of the Precious Cornerstone, for amidst the woes that are pronounced through the Prophet Isaiah upon Judah and upon Assyria and upon Ephraim, there are promises of the messiah who is the true hope of Israel. If we were to look for a practical lesson in Isaiah chapter 28, it would be the lesson of Romans chapter 8 verses 1 through 4. Do you remember the Apostle states “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus hath freed us from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of God might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” For you see the great lesson that a Christian needs to learn, once he has put his trust in Jesus Christ, is that the life that we live is to be lived in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Now it is extremely important of course that we learn what it is to be a Christian, to become one and do I have to say to this audience how we become a Christian. We know that the only thing necessary is for us to realize that Jesus Christ has died for our sins as the son of God that he took upon himself the judgment that was due us and that when we turn our hearts in trust to him and say thank you Lord for dying for me, that moment I am given new life, I am born again, I become a new person, my sins are forgiven, I become a son of God, a child in the family of God, I am justified, I am sanctified positionally. I still possess my old nature and I still sin, but before a God I stand as a holy person. All of these things transpire the moment that I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that is what it is to become a Christian. That moment you have become a Christian when you say thank you Lord for dying for me, that is the transformation. That means we pass from death to life, from darkness to His marvelous light, and remember this comes by simple trust. It does not come by works of righteousness which we have done, it does not come from joining the church, it does not come from praying through, it does not come from the ordinances, baptism or the Lord's supper, it does not come from culture, it does not come from reformation. It comes through simple trust; that is, we receive as a gift everlasting life. It's something God is anxious to confer upon His own.

Now then for many people, that's the end of the Christian life. They spend the rest of their lives rejoicing in the fact that they are Christians, that they have been saved. And I surely think and I don't want to create a false impression at all, but I surely think that we should spend the rest of our lives and of eternity rejoicing in the fact that we do have this everlasting life, that we have been saved. I don't think a Christian ever gets to the place where it does not move him deeply in his heart to know that he has been saved and delivered.

But there is more in the Christian life than that, and God would have us grow and mature, and you know we grow and mature on the same principle by which we were

saved, and that is the principle of faith. It's as we look to Christ who died for us that we become Christians, and it is as we look to the risen Messiah at the right hand of the throne of God who has undertaken to care for us and guide us and lead us and be our greater priest, it is as we lean upon him, walk by the Spirit which he has given us, that we grow in grace, that we become useful to God, that we find our place in the local church, exercise our spiritual gifts to the building up of the body of Christ and the glorification of God Himself.

Now the lessons that Judah was being taught by Isaiah, by God ultimately, was primarily the lesson of trust in the Holy One of Israel. Leaning on the arm of the flesh is walking by the flesh. Leaning on Egypt is leaning upon their own wisdom, their own strength or human strength, and it is this scheming that God despises. Have you ever done that as a Christian? Have you ever tried to fulfill the will of God yourself? Well, I would imagine if you never have, you are not human. So don't look so pious there in the audience as if you have never done that. I have a good friend who says if you look pious like this, you might lie in other things too. [Laughter] Now that's the great practical lesson that we are going to see coming up over and over again in these chapters.

But looking at the 28th chapter now, the first six verses give us the prophecy of the fall of Samaria. Now remember the time is just a few years after Hezekiah has come to his co-regency with Ahaz. It is perhaps 725 B.C. and the fall of Samaria is 722 B.C. but it's obvious that Samaria is going to fall to Assyria, and now the prophet, receiving from the spirit of God indication of the culmination of that fact, prophesied. This is, in our outline, by the way, Roman 1, the prophecy of the fall of Samaria, and you will notice as we read these six verses that the theme of them is that proud Samaria is going to be plucked like an early fig and what a beautiful figure that is!

You know I have some fig trees around my house. I have a Texas fig tree in a lot by the side of my house and it is full of all kinds of figs, but when you go out to get them, there are these little shriveled up currants of figs, I don't know why that was called

the Texas. I am sure that must have been mislabeled when I bought that, but they the minute you go out to pick them, they are nothing, but then I have another fig tree. It's an Alabama or South Carolina fig tree I am sure. It is a lovely fig tree and the most luscious figs and some of them are about that big. You won't believe me, but they are tremendous in size. It's all due to the one who performs the horticulture I am sure, but anyway last year or the year before in the early part of the summer when fig trees are not supposed to have any figs, my fig tree had about fifty figs and I felt exactly like Isaiah felt here. When you see a fig tree with figs on it in June or July instead of August or September, you will rush out to get them because it's in advance of the time and of course you'll rush in and tell your wife, Look what I've got over my fig tree, a fig.

Now that's exactly what Isaiah says Samaria is. It's like a fig that comes before it should come and you grab it and you eat it before you even think. Notice,

“Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of those who are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one (that's Assyria) who like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand” probably with the almighty hand of God. “The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trampled under feet: And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley (that's Samaria), shall be a fading flower, and like the early fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth it, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.”

And that's exactly what he means. He means it's like a fig which you pick off of the tree when it's not supposed to be there. It's two months ahead of time and before you can look at it, you have already eaten it. You want it so. Now that's what Samaria is going to be. As you know it's a terrible prophecy coming from the prophet directed

toward the northern kingdom of Israel. So in these verses he sets forth the picture of Samaria, a beautiful city, a beautiful city that was sitting on a mountain with valleys about, lovely city with all of its cultivated land about it. Assyria is going to come down and it's going to fall into the hands of the invader.

Now in verses 5 and 6, he gives the promise. After the trumpeting of the judgment, he tempers it a little here and he says “In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.” I think that the residue are the Judahites and the members of the Northern Kingdom who have remained faithful. “And for a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to those who turn the battle to the gate.” So fading flower Samaria is going to be taken by Assyria.

You will notice too that as you read these texts that there are two types of sins that Isaiah singles out. Number one, the Samaritans or those who lived in Samaria, in the northern kingdom, had turned to drink in increasing numbers. He calls them the drunkards of Ephraim. Now I don't want to make any application to the United States for I have no possible way of knowing if we in our drinking could compare favorably or unfavorably with Samaria. There is no way for me to know that.

The second sin that is particularly mentioned is the sin of pride and Ephraim was proud. The Northern Kingdom was proud before God and if there is one thing the Bible says over and over again, it is the proud man is heading for a tremendous fall. In Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 18, in a very familiar verse, we read “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” It doesn't always happen. It didn't happen to Joe Namath but it surely happens as a general principle that when a man is lifted up with pride, it's not long before he is going to have a tremendous fall, and Samaria has been lifted up with pride and they are heading for a tremendous fall and they are going into captivity, and the only hope of Samaria is Jehovah who is the pride of the believers of Judah and of Samaria.



Now that is the prophecy of the fall of Samaria, and if a Judahite had been reading this, he might have been rejoicing in it up to this point, but as is so often true in the word of God, the things that we think apply to others, we discover also apply to us. And so it's not surprising that we read in the 7th verse “But these also have erred through wine.” And here in verse 7 through verse 22, we have the prophecy of the fall of Judah. This is roman 2 in our outline, the prophecy of the fall of Judah, but they also, now this is the reference to Judah, and now you will notice that in the forefront of the judgment that is to be pronounced upon Judah, is the priest and his compatriot, the prophet. Notice the 7th verse,

“But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”

Now let me stop for a moment and point out what Isaiah is really saying. He is saying one of the most amazing things. He says in that 7th verse, near the end of the text, “They err in vision.” That you know what that means? That means that the priest who had as one of his offices the teaching of the word of God for they should be strong in the knowledge of the truth. In the midst of the teaching of the truth, he was intoxicated; and the prophet, the man who had vision and who also executed the judgment of God in many cases, that man errs in the carrying out of his duties. In other words, it is not that the priest carries out his priestly duties and then goes home and has a big night at home.

It's not that the prophet carries out his duties and then goes out and has a night on the town afterwards, but it's in the very activity to which God has called him, it's in that very activity that he is intoxicated. And so you can see the drunken stumbling priests attempting to carry out the priestly sacrifices filled with strong drink, and the prophets in

the midst of what they say are visions for the people of Israel, they stagger and mumble out the jumble through swollen lips, the prophecies of God so called.

A few years ago in Selma, Alabama, this was many years before the march, ten or fifteen years ago, there was a rector of a church in the city of Selma who on Easter morning went into the pulpit having had too many drinks and instead of reading from the Prayer Book those portions of the Prayer Book that had to do with Easter, he turned in one of his little books, I am not sure this is the Episcopalian prayer book, but he turned in one of his books and read the funeral service on Easter morning. Needless to say, the congregation was quite shocked. It was not done on purpose. You might suspect that in some churches, it might be done on purpose, but this was not done on purpose; this was done because he was under the influence of strong drink.

Now do you think that’s bad? Do you think it’s bad for a man of God supposedly in the midst of carrying out of spiritual responsibilities before God to be so under the influence of the strong drink, under the spirits, that the Spirit has no control of him? Do you think that’s bad? Well, it’s no wonder then that God speaks through the Prophet Isaiah in such tones of judgment. “They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit” what a vile expression and how vile the situation must have been “and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.”

Now then listen to the taunts of the priests as they taunt Isaiah “Whom shall he teach knowledge?” By the way if you have a pencil and you don’t mind writing in your Bibles and you shouldn’t mind, put a little line around that he because that should be read with a little emphasis because the reference is to Isaiah himself. These are in quotes, “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? “Those that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.”

In other words, the sneers are directed here to the prophet, the intolerable preacher, for Isaiah undoubtedly day after day as he saw the wickedness of the priesthood and of the stool of the prophets and their line, pointed out over and over

again how they were sinning against God and how they were bringing judgment upon Judah by their wicked activities, and so they began, as they thought of Isaiah the Prophet, and as they saw him come down the street, they would say of Isaiah here comes that preacher who is always saying the same old thing, and furthermore it's all that simple stuff, too. There is nothing great about it; there is nothing that requires any perception.

Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Well babies. He can only teach babies, those that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. I think one of the worst things that can ever happen among the children of God is that sense of pride that comes when a person learns a few verses of Scripture and thinks that because he knows a few verses of Scripture and a few doctrines that now no one can teach him anything, and you know it seems to me that in evangelicalism, we have a great deal of that today. We have a lot of people because they have been to a few Bible classes and because they have learned a few of the basic doctrines of the word of God, they think there is nothing else in the word of God for them. They think that once they learn these few things, that those Scriptures do not afford them with any opportunity for further knowledge, and it is my firm conviction that we have only begun to understand the word of God, we who teach the scripture.

In evangelical circles I am speaking of, I mean in places where we acknowledge that the Bible is the word of God and that the truth of Scripture is the truth of God, we have only begun to plum the depths that are in the holy Scriptures, and if we should ever get to the place that we should think -- may I say just a word to a few of you who attend Believers Chapel? If we should ever get to the place and feel that because we come to Believers Chapel, we have the truth, I want to tell you I'll go home and I hope the elders and the deacons and others will, too, I'll go home and fall down upon my knees and say O God, where have I failed? Nothing worse than the pride that thinks that it has arrived.

A few years ago, I went up to a Christian college campus to speak for a week of meetings. One girl, but this was indicative of several on the campus, one girl heard me

speak at a preseries meeting and she wrote me a letter. It was a very interesting letter. I am not going to read it all, but I have it here. I saved it. Some of the things in it are these. This is an evangelical school. I would presume that 95 percent of the students in this school profess to be Christians. It's a fine school. You can get a good education here. If you graduate from this school, you need not be ashamed to enter any graduate school. You are well prepared. This is what she said,

“Evangelicals are in the habit of using quite drably terms of a personal relationship in reference to God, but it seems to me there is a colossal amount of fuzziness in the use of such concepts that really needs to be thought out in more detail. Despite all the personal language, I know very few Christians for whom this is experiential reality when they are honest with themselves.

“What is the presence of God beyond a vague feeling or something indistinguishable from myself? At what points in my life can I look back and say definitely God was at work in this specific incident? Very few, frankly. In what sense can God be called a personal friend when our relationship is so unlike that I have with the friends who talk with me everyday?

“Perhaps an illustration will clarify what’s bothering me. It seems to me that my relationship with God is very much like my relationship to President Johnson. I have never seen the man, but I am reasonably sure he exists. I have contact with him through proclamations he puts out at various times and in general terms (Scripture). I never thought of President Johnson’s words as having any connection with Scripture. I often fire off telegrams to him about issues which concern me. Sometimes shortly after my telegram, he takes action which seems to follow my advice. Other times, he completely disregards what I suggest, but he never sends me a personal acknowledgement of my communication (prayer).

“The Covenant with Death and the Sure Foundation” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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“Is this what Christians mean by personal relationship with God? I would call the application of the adjective “personal” to my relationship with Johnson, an odd usage of the term to say the least. Just how does my relationship with God differ from that?”

Well she is a professing Christian, and she heard me speak in chapel and she put a little note on the outside. This is what she said, “P.S. after chapel. Please don't talk down to us. Don't forget everyone at (and she named the school) takes at least 14 hours of Bible.” [Pause]

“Dear Dr. Johnson: I felt I had to take this opportunity to thank you for the messages you have brought this week. It's really grand. It's grand to hear about the Lord I love so much and so and so college student or not, there is a great deal I have to learn about Him.

“I know you have received a certain amount of criticism from several of the intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals on our campus. Some I know personally, but it is the word of God you are preaching and I along with many others are praying for these who would try to make reason their God. But I thank God for people like you who can put things in terms I can understand. I really feel the Holy Spirit has been working this week. Maybe this can even account for the forwardness of those with negative views and so on.”

I mention this because not everybody on that campus is like this. But you know this little girl put in words what exists in the lives of many evangelicals today. To them, scripture is no more real than a telegram they fire off to President Nixon or Johnson, and prayer is no more significant than an answer they might have to some desire as it is expressed in an action of Congress.

And I think that when we ever get to the stage in our Christian life that we think that we have arrived, and that there is no more in the word of God, then we are in sad condition. And then Judah, they had arrived. They had arrived at the place when the Prophet Isaiah gave his messages. Wouldn't you love to have heard Isaiah? My goodness, I would travel for miles to hear Isaiah preach once and they had the opportunity to hear him day after day and what did they say? Who will he teach knowledge? Who will he teach doctrine? Well he can teach babies, but he can't teach us anything.

For, and now notice and if you want to see some dripping sarcasm and irony, listen to verse 10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." That's the way Isaiah preaches. They scoff at the petty simplicities of the prophet and let me read it in Hebrew. It's even more emphatic in Hebrew. And listen this is what they say Isaiah said, "*Sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav, ze'er sham, ze'er sham.*" And you will notice the little words. They just mimic him, all these little words he is giving. Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little tiny bit, and there a little tiny bit. That's all the Prophet Isaiah can give.

He can't tell us anything about Bultmann. He can't tell us anything about Kuhlmann. He can't tell us anything about Mulmann. He cannot tell us anything about Pannenberg or any about great scholars of the day. He can only tell us these little things, which babies need to learn. Today men want to hear about the new morality, the new hermeneutics. They want to hear about everything that is new and different, but they do not want to go back to the holy Scriptures and study them.

One of the saddest things in our theological seminaries is that our men often in our theological seminaries, now I think it is not so audacious yet, but in our theological seminaries they study more about the Bible than the Bible itself, more about it than the Bible itself, and more about men who write on the Bible or who speak of the Bible than

the Bible itself. And I want to tell you that when we get to the place that we study more of what men say about the Bible -- that’s important to a degree -- but more about what they say of the Scriptures rather than the Scriptures themselves, then we’re on the toboggan that will lead to the same kind of thing that happened to Judah and Samaria.

I heard of a bishop of London once who became so exasperated with his congregation, that as he preached the word of God, did not pay any attention till one day he opened up the Hebrew text, and he began to read in the Hebrew text. He just suddenly in the midst of his message turned to a passage and said, “*B’reshit bora Elohim et ha shamayim v et ha’aretz v’haaretz. hyita tohu v’vohu*” etc., and he read about five verses. He said he had the attention of everybody in his audience. [Laughter] And then he stopped and he said now you were not paying me any attention when I was giving you the milk of the word of God. But when I read to you in an unknown tongue, you pay attention, and he proceeded to give them a well-needed lecture on the necessity for listening to holy Scripture.

Do you remember what happened to Paul when he came to Athens? My, I would love to have heard Paul. What are the things I want to do when I get to heaven? I hope up there they have replay of all the things that have happened down here on the earth. [Laughter] Instant replay of Athens, instant replay of Corinth, instant replay of Isaiah’s ministry. Isn’t that going to be wonderful? And sit down and see what happened with our own eyes. And I’ll tell you how there are so many of these things I want to be and see that it’s hard to know where to begin, but I do want to see the Apostle Paul when he came to the great intellectual center of Athens and he preached.

And do you remember what they said about him? “Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say?” Isn’t that interesting? The same kind of attitude, the intellectuals of Judah have the same type of attitude as the intellectuals of Athens. They call the Apostle Paul a babblers. That’s what those words from the Hebrew which I read for you indicate, that’s what they

thought Isaiah was. “*Sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav*” etc. “*ze'er sham, ze'er sham*” just a babbling, and that word in the Greek text in Acts chapter 17 and verse 18 means a seed picker.

Means he is a kind of amateur philosopher. He doesn't have any system. As the British say, he just has bits and pieces. He has a little knowledge of this and a little knowledge of that, but he doesn't have any understanding of philosophy like we stoics and like we epicureans. What is this fellow going to say? And all it was, was just a flippant prejudgment. You know what they probably said. They probably said, you know, it's very unscientific the things that he is saying. Well we who have a scientific mind can see immediately that what he is saying is unscientific. They were prejudging everything. And thus of course, they proved that they were not really scientific after all.

A few years ago, I was invited out to speak to a group on the campus at SMU. They were a group of young kids who were living in a house in order to study the truth together and they had a discussion night after night of various aspects of the things that they were learning, and they invited me out one night to speak to them on scriptural things and they asked me to present Christianity to them and I presented Christianity to them and then we had a big discussion afterwards. But it was very evident that they had already formed their opinions and occasionally when I would mention the word scientific and I couldn't help but think how unscientific to call something unscientific when you have never investigated it for yourself.

So Isaiah, he continues in the 11th verse and says “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” In other words, what he means in the 11th verse is this that it's fitting for you to speak of me that I am a babbler, that I am speaking to you like a man in an unknown tongue, all of these little simplicities because God is going to speak to you in that way. And this is one of the most terrible judgments. You have accused me of speaking in the babblings of incomprehensibility, something that only a child could understand. You could not understand for you are too far above it. Well I



want to tell you that God is going to judge you for the fact that you have not listened to the scripture and He is going to speak to you in a tongue you cannot understand. And again it's just like God to do this for the very thing over which we stumble and will not pay attention to, is the thing that causes us to stumble. And so we read in the 12th verse

“To whom he said, This is the rest by which you may cause the weary to rest” I have been preaching to you rest in other words “and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. “But the word of the Lord shall be” that word was in verse 13 should be shall be “But the word of the Lord shall be unto them” what will it be? *Sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav, ze'er sham, ze'er sham.*” In other words the very thing that you have said I have been preaching to you that’s what God is going to say to you, but He is going to say it to you in a tongue you cannot understand.

What is He referring to? Well He is referring to the Assyrians. The Assyrians are going to come down and ultimately they are going to take you. But He has also something far beyond that. I think of course He is speaking in a principle here and it is that when we refuse to hear the light, the simplest things become depths to us. Have you have ever noticed this about the truth of God? If you don't respond to it, it becomes more difficult to get it. Did you know that?

And did you know as a Christian that if you do not respond to the truth that is proclaimed to you, it will ultimately come to the place that you cannot because you will not. That is why it is so important to respond to the word of God when it is proclaimed. That’s why it's so important when the gospel is proclaimed for men to respond to it, for if they continue to reject and continue to reject and continue to reject, they do not stand the same position. That truth becomes a truth that hardens.

Israel is the great illustration. Finally the nation as a whole was hardened and given over to judgment. And the same thing applies to individuals and may I say also in measure to Christians that if you do not respond to the truth of God, if you set your will,

your stubborn for it against God, finally the truth will be incomprehensible to you, though it is the simplest kind of truth for someone whose heart is open.

Now this text is also used in the New Testament and I am going to ask you if you will to turn over to First Corinthians chapter 14 and we are going to say a word about the tongues question because the tongues question is the question that touches this verse. 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verses 21 and 22. In verse 20, the Apostle states “Brethren,” 1 Corinthians chapter 14,

“Brethren, be not children in understanding; however in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues” (will you please notice this text. This tells us one of the reasons why God gave the gift of tongues in the early church.) “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.”

Tongues are given for unbelievers, not believers “but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them who believe.” Tongues are for assigned not to them that believe but to them that believe not. Why did God give the gift of speaking in tongues? It was very simple. He gave the gift of speaking in tongues in order that He might speak to Israel by that fact. On the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached his great sermon and men began to speak in tongues, that speaking in tongues was designed to be the evidence of the judgment of God upon a disobedient nation.

It was designed to impress them with the fact that they had departed from God and it was His last call to them in a sense. He had prophesied that He was going to speak to them with lips that were unknown and so on the Day of Pentecost, He spoke because He was now speaking through a new group, the apostles and those in Israel who had followed our Lord and this was designed to be a judgment upon Israel and wherever

men spoke in tongues in the early days, it was God’s way of saying I have abandoned Israel. My judgment has come upon them. Turn to the message that these men are proclaiming, for as they spoke in tongues that was a supernatural act and it was designed to convince men of the truth that the apostles were proclaiming.

Now today men stand up in some of our assemblies which are supposedly Christians and speak in an unknown gibberish. That is not biblical speaking in tongues. Biblical speaking in tongues was speaking in a known language, not in unknown language. The known that adjective is not found in the New Testament at all with the word tongue. It was supplied by the translators who misunderstood to speak in tongues not unknown tongues and it was God’s way of pronouncing judgment upon Israel prophesied here in Isaiah chapter 28 verse 14. “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people who are in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death.”

Now this covenant with death is the covenant with Egypt. This is Isaiah’s interpretation of it. He says to make a covenant with Egypt and to lean on Egypt is a covenant with death, not life “and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us” so they were saying “for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”

Now Isaiah is interpreting this. They didn’t say we are making lies our refuge. They didn’t say under falsehood have we hid ourselves. They were saying we want to make an alliance with Egypt, but this was lack of trust in God. It was lying to God. And so here the prophet says that not to lean upon God is to lean upon falsehood. To lean upon Egypt is to lean upon death. I think that ultimately the last covenant of death that shall be made is the covenant that the antichrist shall make with Israel in the last days. It is described in the 9th chapter of the Book of Daniel verses 24 to 27. When a covenant is concluded between the antichrist and the nation, and the ancient worship is reinstated in the temple, that is the final covenant of death, and will signal of course the great

tribulation judgment which shall come upon the whole inhabited earth. But this is the beginning of that same type of thing.

Now the only hope is given in verse 16. “Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I have laid” the Hebrew text says, not lay “Behold, I have laid in Zion for a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” The only hope that Judah has is hope in the Messiah. The only hope that she has to escape the ultimate judgment is the hope in God. Now when He says I have laid in Zion a foundation stone, there can be no question of the meaning of this. This is a reference to our Lord, and when He says I have laid, He means that in eternity past, in the mind of God, Jesus Christ was to come as the stone for Israel.

In history, when the Davidic promises were given, Micah speaks of them. When the Davidic promises were given in history, those promises became sure and certain as they came from the mouth of God, a sure foundation. So the stone was laid eternally in the mind of God. It was laid historically when the promises were first given to David and the only hope is in the Davidic promises.

Michael Faraday, the great scientist, when he was dying was asked Mr. Faraday what are your speculations now? He said, “Speculations, I have none. I am resting on certainties.” And then he quoted Second Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.” That's the only hope and that has always been the only hope. Trust in the stone, our Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what the experiences of life may be and they were tough for Judah and they can be tough for you. The one stone of certainty is Jesus Christ and the promises that surround him. No matter what comes to pass, if our hope is grounded in that foundation stone, that proven stone, that tried stone, nothing can disturb us. We may have to die. We may have to go in a nuclear holocaust. So what? If we are resting upon the rock, our future is secure; and that was the message in the day of Isaiah. The stone that had been laid.

Now let me just read a few more verses. “Justice also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Judgment is coming. “And your covenant with death shall be annulled (it shall be struck out) your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trampled down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.”

Now notice this. Anybody who has ever wrestled with his wife or with her husband over the bedcovers can understand the next verse. “For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” That -- do you know what he means by that? That’s a very homely figure, isn’t it? Have you ever wrestled with your wife over the covers? Wife, have you ever wrestled with your husband over the cover? Have you ever wound up with your head out and your feet out and just a little bit over the middle, looking like a map of the earth, frigid at the north and south poles and dwelling in the temperate zone over the rest of the body?

You know there’s a great lesson in this. Do you know what it means? Well of course the bed is not long enough and the cover is not wide enough, and so is all policy that trusts in the flesh. That’s what he means. Any covenant made with Egypt is like a bed that’s too short. It’s like covers that are not wide not enough to cover you. It’s going to be a great disappointment and so any trust in the arm of the flesh if you are a non-Christian in this audience tonight, any trust in your good works for salvation is a bed that’s too short, covers that do not cover you. They will not stand up when the judgment comes and for Christians any trust in the arm of the flesh and for the church and for the local church, any trust by the elders, any trust by the deacons, any trust by the believers in the arm of the flesh, in our wisdom, in our strength, is a bed that’s too short. It’s cover

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that is not wide enough to cover. The only hope is in the rock and the stone and the word that comes from Him. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father how wonderful is the truth. May you administer to us for Jesus' sake. Amen.