



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 6:1-8

“The Vision of the Four Chariots.”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are at the concluding vision which the prophet had, which is recorded for us in the first eight verses of the 6th chapter of his book. And so now, will you take your Bibles and turn to the Book of Zechariah, and we shall read the first eight verses of the 6th chapter.

“And I turned and lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. (You will recognize that I am reading from the New Scofield edition and my edition will be slightly different from yours. I think you have ‘mountains of brass.’) Before the first chariot were red horses, and before the second chariot black horses, and before the third chariot white horses, and before the fourth chariot dappled and bay horses. (Now I do not like that rendering at all. There is just something about the word ‘grizzled’ that I like. [Laughter] So I’m going to keep that. Grizzled and bay horses.) Then I answered and said unto the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said unto me, ‘These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The black horses which are there go forth into the north country, the white go forth after them, and the grizzled go forth toward the

south country.’ And the bay went forth, and sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth. And He said, ‘Go from here; walk to and fro through the earth.’ So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried He to me, and spoke unto me, saying, ‘Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted My Spirit in the north country.’”

May God bless this reading from his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for gathering us together here in this auditorium today to listen to Thy word. We’re so thankful that we have the open Bible and that we may ponder the Scriptures which have been given to us by prophets and apostles, holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And we pray, Lord, that Thou would give us understanding; and before understanding, motivation and the desire to know that which Thou hast given us in the word. We realize, Lord, that it is through the Scriptures that we come to know Thee better, and also when our lives come to glorify Thee.

And so we pray that through the study of the word of God we may come to know Thee better and serve Thee better. We thank Thee for that which Thou hast done in our midst. We look forward with anticipation and expectation to the future. And we pray, Lord, that there shall always be a sense of reality and a sense of expectancy, a sense of the presence of the risen Lord in our midst, a sense of the experience of the supernatural Christian life, with all of the surprises that it brings.

And we pray that this exciting life which Thou hast given to us may be manifest through us to the glory of God. We know, Lord, that in Thy word Thou hast said that where believers meet together, that there Thou art in the midst, and that the meeting of the local church is a temple of God in which Thou art manifested. And so we pray that in our meetings we may have the sense of Thy presence, the sense that Thou art here.

And so, when ones come in whom Thou hast brought here, whose hearts have been touched and made tender, that they may sense that through the ministry of the word is the answer of God to the problems of their lives. And so, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt lead us and guide us. As the hymn-writer has expressed it, “Lead on, O King Eternal.” And may we follow in Thy train, and may the expression of this local church be the expression of the life of Jesus Christ, because in the hearts of each one of us there is a manifestation of him. Supply the needs that exist. We thank Thee for the past; we look forward to the future. And as the work of our Lord is carried on here, may the result be not the glorification of men, but a sense of the glory of God and of Thy presence and power in our midst. Now we ask Thy blessing upon this service, upon the ministry of the word, upon the hymns of praise that are sung. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today as we continue our series of studies in Zechariah in the light of current events is the vision of the four chariots. And we’re turning to chapter 6 for the eighth and last of the night visions which the great prophet had many hundreds of years ago. Which visions, though written many hundreds of years ago, give us a great deal of light upon the things that are transpiring in 1967. Christianity is superior to the world religions by reason of its revelation of grace. I hope I am not being partisan like the priest that was speaking to a friend of his, a protestant, with whom he had a great deal of fellowship. They were at a meeting, a party, and they were discussing how they had managed to remain friends for a long time. Others were about. And finally the priest said, “But it’s really no wonder that we’ve managed to remain friends. After all, we teach the same lesson, we preach the same gospel, you in your way, and I in His.”

[Laughter] It may sound very partisan for us to say that Christianity is superior to the world’s religions by its revelation of grace, but if you know anything about the religions of the world, you know that this is true. It is the thing that marks off Christianity as being

distinctive. The fact that it presents a God who cares, and not a God who has to be made to care by all types of works and activities.

Just this week I was reading in the 46th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, and in it, there is one of the most remarkable and, I think, one of the best descriptions that we find in all of the Bible of the difference between the gods and the God. It's that wonderful picture in which Isaiah presents the children of Israel, greatly influenced by the gods and idols of Babylon, and in which the prophet, as the voice of God, appeals to them and asks them to consider the kind of God he is, as over against the kind of God that the heathen gods are. And he starts out by saying that the gods of the heathens are gods whom you have to carry. And you get this wonderful picture of a great idol, a gilded idol, one that was very expensive to make, and very heavy. And you get the picture of a great deal of men who are carrying these very heavy gods about.

They are like furniture movers, and they handle the gods. They bring them into the temple; they set them up. The gods cannot speak. If you ask of them a favor, they cannot hear. They cannot talk; they are dead. They are burdens to be borne. That is the god of the heathen. And then Isaiah speaks about the God of Israel, and he says that the chief characteristic of the God of Israel is not that he is someone to be carried, but he is someone who carries his people. “Hearken unto me, oh House of Jacob, and all the remnant of the House of Israel, who have been borne by me from their birth, and who are carried from the womb. I, even to your old age, I am he, and even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you.” And then he goes on to describe the gods whom they have to carry. Why, you have to bear them upon your shoulders. You have to carry the idols. You have to set them in their places. And when you set them in their places, they cannot hear and they cannot speak.

Now today we have, I think, the same thing that Isaiah had in his day. We have the gods, and all of the wearying traditions of church attendance in order to gain acceptance before God. Of all of the wearying practice of engaging in church ritual in

order to please God. In all of the wearying demands that we attend prayer meetings, that we sign pledges in order to construct buildings. In order that we be sure to attend all of the functions of the church until finally, the whole system of Christianity is a system of burden bearing. And if you know anything about what it is to be in a Christian (I'm using that in the broadest and loosest sense, of course), in a professing Christian church without the vitality of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, you know the burden bearing kind of God that exists there. Now, on the other hand, the New Testament and the Old Testament both give to us a sweet music of a God who carries his people. And the distinction between Christianity and the religions of the world is bound up in this; that in Christianity we have a revelation of a God who ministers to us on the basis of grace. And you do not find that anywhere else. That's why Christianity is unique, that is why it is distinct, and that is why it is satisfying to those who have moral sensibility and who desire that which answers to their problems and to their needs.

Now there is another fact that distinguishes Christianity, and it is just as important. It is the fact that Christianity is distinguished by its revelation of judgment. Now we hear a great deal about grace in our Christian churches which are true to the word, but we do not hear as much about judgment. Now, I do not want to accuse other churches of neglecting this; perhaps we are just as guilty. But the New Testament and the Old Testament both, are full of this presentation of the God who judges. “It is appointed unto men once to die; after this, the judgment.” The writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says. And so, in the New Testament and in the Old Testament, while we laud and praise the grace of God, we should not forget that Christianity is distinguished by its revelation of judgment. Frequently, when people think of judgment, they think of one final judgment. In fact, in many of our great creeds in Christendom it is expressed in that way. I think I shall read one of the creeds to you. “Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body with flesh, bones and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's

nature. Wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.”

The Apostle’s Creed, as you know, reads, “From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Men speak in ordinary conversation of “the judgment,” and they mean by that one last and final judgment. As you study the Bible you discover that there are many judgments. There is more than one judgment in the Bible. In fact, there are at least seven judgment set forth in the word. Some of these are personal, some of these are national. But all of these are judgments that pertain to every one of us. Not all of them directly, some of them pertain to us directly, some of them pertain to us only indirectly. But all of us should be concerned with the judgment program of God. And among the judgments that are set forth in the word of God is the judgment of the nations, or the judgment of the gentiles. And one of the great manifestations of the judgment of the gentiles is expressed during the time of the great tribulation period which shall come to pass upon the earth, just prior to the second advent of the Lord Jesus. Of course, all men who have not believed in Jesus Christ must ultimately appear before God at the judgment of the great white throne. From this, genuine believers are exempt.

But we’re not talking about these individual judgments this morning; we want to center our attention upon that which Zechariah sets before us in his passage, and that is truth that pertains to the last judgment of the gentiles during that tribulation period; judgment of gentiles as nations who have departed from God. Now this is a judgment that we cannot escape. We cannot escape the other judgment. There is no way to escape that judgment which pertains to us. We may think that there is, and we can escape human judgment, but we cannot escape divine judgment. My great teacher of the word, Donald Grey Barnhouse, said many years ago that when he was a young man he heard a sermon by an evangelist on the text, “Prepare to meet thy God.” He said he really didn’t remember much about that sermon, or forgot most of it through the dimming years, but there was one thing that did impress him, and that was the logic of a statement

that the evangelist made. He said “The reason that we should prepare to meet our God is that we must meet our God.” And it’s good for us, too, to remember that these judgments are not something which we study academically, in a morning message such as this, but they are things that concern us far more than the daily affairs of the life in which we are engaged. They are much more important than the fortunes of the Dallas Cowboys, although I must say that they are very important to me, and I’m feeling very low this morning, I want to assure you, on the human level. But these things that concern the word of God are far more significant than the experiences of men upon the earth.

Now, Zechariah’s eighth vision concerns this past gentile judgment which God has pronounced upon the nations over history, and then it looks on to this future judgment of the nations, about which I’ve just been speaking. It occurs just prior to the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes to establish his kingdom upon the earth. We have the antecedents of human judgment in all of the experiences of the nations under God. Those of us, who are as old as I am, remember very distinctly the experiences of World War II, and we studied, when we were in school, World War I. In fact, we studied World War I so much, that I sometimes think I was there, but I really was not. I’m not quite that old, though I may look that old. But I do remember a great deal about it, and I remember a great deal about World War II. And I can remember our teachers telling us, both in college and university, that the Germans were greatly to blame because of World War I, and I remember getting the distinct impression that the United States was righteous, and Germany was unrighteous.

And furthermore, that all of those countries that were linked with the United States were also righteous. That Russia was righteous, that France was righteous, and that Great Britain was righteous. And I knew they were righteous because they kept telling us all the time that they’re righteous. [Laughter] And this was the impression that I got. Now, it’s very interesting as you look back over God’s dealings with men, to see the rise and fall of the nations. And it’s not a surprise at all, that not only did Germany crumble in

World War I and World War II, but it was not surprising that Russia did too, because it was corrupt to the core. And just as God judged [indistinct], Zionism, which I think we should call it instead of Prussianism, he judged Czarism and he judged all that was there. There is one thing that still puzzles me about World War I and World War II, and that is why God has not judged France yet, because France was utterly corrupt and egged on the great powers in their military designs. But perhaps their judgment is having a man like de Gaulle head them, I don't know. Still, there are some puzzles, of course, in human history. We can never sense, as long as we are in this flesh, all of the reasons that pertain to God's judgment among the nations.

But it's very interesting to notice this about the judgment that God executes upon nations; he always judges most severely those who have heads of state who think that they are God. He does not judge nearly so severely those who are corrupt in their moral life, those that engage in a life of wine, women, and song, so to speak; it's the person who stands up and takes the place of God who seems to draw the extreme judgment from God. And there is a great lesson in that, and also a great insight into the true morality of human beings, as God sees it. It is much more despicable in the sight of God for a man in all of the morality of the present day, to take the place of God, than it is for him to engage in fleshly sins. In other words, the sins of the spirit are, to God, much more significant than the sins of the flesh. And the same pertains to our life. That when we seek to take the place of God in our lives, when we seek to be God, when we rebel against God in our lives, that is far more significant in God's sight than the fleshly sins into which we may fall. Now, of course, both are wrong in the sight of God, but the one is far more heinous in the sight of God than the other. And that gives us a great deal of insight into the significance of sins in the church of Jesus Christ, too. That's why hypocrisy; that's why pride; that's why that type of sin is so much more despicable in God's sight than the other. Now judgment is very important, and judgment among the nations is important. And Zechariah's last vision is a testimony to the importance of

divine judgment, and how he himself is concerned in the rise and fall of the nations that are about us. It's good for Christians to remember that the things which concern us are a concern to God.

Now Zechariah's eighth vision occurred in the nighttime, just as all of his previous visions had. The text states, “And I turned and lifted up mine eyes and looked.” It's still the same night. Now I have a good friend to whom I refer frequently because I've listened to his tapes on the Book of Zechariah, and he says on this first verse, that there are spiritual principles involved in each one of these three verbs. “And I turned.” The Hebrew text really says, “I returned,” and my preacher friend suggested that when it says, “And I returned,” it suggested that Zechariah had been engaging in some rest between the previous vision and this one, and that the principle is that the preacher needs rest. Well I don't really know whether that's found in the text or not. He went on to say, “and lifted up mine eyes.”

Now, to lift up your eyes was an activity to see what God has given us in this vision, and so the principle from this is that the preacher needs to study. Now that, too, is an interesting idea, and one that is not often practiced by those who get behind the pulpit. And finally he said, “and looked.” Now that, of course, is activity, and that has to do with concentration. In other words, we ought to rest, we who teach the word of God, we ought to study, and we ought to really concentrate on the things that we study. Now I'm not sure that Zechariah could have gotten these lessons from this opening verse, but let me say this: that regardless of whether they are found in the text or not, and I'm inclined to think that they are not found in the text at all, at least they are good ideas, and they're something that we ought to bear in mind.

Well Zechariah says, “I turned and I lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold.” And of course, as you've been reading the Book of Zechariah with me, and I hope you have, you notice that this little word “behold” is used by the prophet to point us to something which he considers to be significant. And these visions which were given to

him, he regarded as very significant. And the thing that is most significant to him is that he saw four chariots. He looked and he saw these four chariots coming out from between two mountains. And he was especially impressed by the fact that these mountains were not ordinary mountains. They were not beautiful, green, lovely mountains like the mountains of the Southeast, nor even were they bare and stark and ugly like the mountains of the Midwest and West (I've got some Westernism, the audience should see, and I'm taking great delight in this, but don't take me too seriously, I'm not really an authority on geography).

But at any rate, the thing that impressed him about these mountains was that these mountains were mountains of brass or bronze. Now if you're a student of the Bible, and I guess most of you are in this audience, you know of course, that the chariots are war chariots. And the impression that the Prophet Zechariah no doubt got when he saw these war chariots roaring out from the two mountains, was the impression of warfare. Now the two mountains, most likely, since the prophet's place of prophecy is Jerusalem, the two mountains are probably the mountains of Mount Zion and Mount Olivet. And there was a valley between the two mountains, the valley of Jehoshaphat. And, if you have read the Book of Joel, you will remember that in the Book of Joel one of the great battles that is to be fought in the future is to be fought in the valley of Jehoshaphat. And that name, itself, which was a name given by reason of what would happen there, for it means “The Lord shall judge.” It's designed to stress the fact that we are heading toward this great judgment, which is to take place outside the city of Jerusalem. And also, upon and concerning Jerusalem. And in the 14th chapter of this book, we shall read of the details.

Well Zechariah sees the four chariots, they come out from the mountains and the mountains are mountains of brass or bronze. Now let's, for just a moment, go back in our Bible and ask ourselves the question, “What does the prophet mean when he speaks of mountains of brass or bronze?” Now those of you who have not been here with me all along, you may justly criticize me at this point and say, “Well, Dr. Johnson is not giving

us any clues as to how he arrives at the interpretation of these things.” But those of you who were at the beginning will remember that I gave you some principles for the understanding of symbolic, or apocalyptic language. And here we have the apocalyptic type of literature, and we are following these principles by looking in divine revelation for help with regard to the meaning. Fortunately, in the case of the mountains of brass or bronze, there is little doubt of its significance. In the tabernacle, for example, the place where the animals were slain was called the brazen altar, or the brass altar. It was the place of judgment. It was the place where the animal was slain, in order that the offerer might be accepted before God.

And then you will remember that later on, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and God sent fiery serpents among the people because they had disobeyed him, he gave Moses a remedy. And the remedy was the serpent of brass, or the serpent of bronze. And when the children of Israel were bitten by one of the venomous reptiles, they were told that if they would simply look at the serpent of brass, they would be healed. Now the Lord Jesus, many hundreds of years later, speaking with Nicodemus, that great religious leader who had not been born again, told Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent (the serpent of brass; the serpent of bronze) in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The physical life of the Old Testament illustrated the spiritual life that is available through the brazen serpent, our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls himself the brazen serpent because it was on Calvary’s cross that he bore the judgment for our sins. He was the serpent of brass when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And so, our Lord Jesus is the one of whom Paul wrote when he said, “He hath made him to be sin for us (that is our Lord Jesus as the brazen serpent) that we might become the righteousness of God in him, through the fact that he bore our judgment.” Now when Zechariah sees the four chariots coming out from the mountains, and the mountains are

mountains of bronze, this is just his way of saying further, that the warfare that is signified by the chariots, is warfare in judgment. And so, we can expect that this vision will have something to do with judgment. That is shall have to do with warfare and destruction and catastrophe. That, I think, is its primary meaning, regardless of what we may see in the details.

Zechariah then goes on to describe the kinds of chariots that he saw coming out. He saw one chariot that was pulled by red horses. Now in the Book of Revelation, in the 6th chapter, it's very striking that these very words are used. A rider comes out on a red horse. A rider comes out on a white horse. A rider comes out on a black horse. And a rider comes out on a pale green horse. Now, in that respect, that differs from Zechariah, who describes a chariot that comes out with dapple and bay horses. But he says the first chariot was pulled by red horses, and the chariot was pulled by black horses, and the third chariot was pulled by white horses, and the fourth chariot was pulled by grizzled and bay horses. Now I think that the symbols of each of these are relatively unimportant for us. All of them speak of judgment in various ways. The black of famine, the red of bloodshed, the white of victory and triumph (but victory and triumph by others instead of those who are involved), and finally the grizzled and bay.

Now since this is somewhat unique, let me say just a word about it. The first thing is, what in the world does this word “grizzled” really mean? We don't use that very much anymore. It's true, we speak about a grizzly bear, but what does grizzled really mean? You know, I just wanted to be sure about this, and so I took my Oxford Dictionary and I opened it up. And I must say I was a little nonplussed, because I read that grizzled means “a gray-haired old man.” And I was very disconcerted to realize that I am grizzled. [Laughter] Now how would you feel, if you read in a dictionary that you were grizzled? Now that would be a very discouraging thing, but nevertheless, that is exactly what I am according to this text of Scripture. I am a grizzled old man. And so the grizzled horses, I'm kind of attached to, as a result of this. Now this fourth chariot, it is

said, had two types of horses pulling it. Grizzled and bay. Now bay is a word which means strong, in Hebrew, so let's call them the gray-haired and strong horses. And that was a little comforting because it seemed to suggest that though they were grizzled, they also were strong. And perhaps that pertains to me too. No, it could not, really.

Well at this point Zechariah is very much interested. You would be too; you would ask a lot of questions. And the way to learn is to ask questions. I think that's a principle that we do find here. When Zechariah didn't know anything he didn't hesitate to ask. And so he said to the angel who talked with him, “What are these, my Lord?” He's especially interested in these chariots and what they mean, for that is the emphasis of the word “these.” Now of course it's nice to have an angel handy in order to interpret the word. I have an angel in my house, but she's not always as good as the interpreting angel in interpreting the word. She's very good at criticizing interpretations, [Laughter] but she is not very good in making interpretations, at least authoritative interpretations.

You know I have some friends who have the surprising and very strange interpretation, that the angels of the letters of the Book of Revelation, contrary to all of the usage in the book, refer to pastors in churches. And I've always thought that was the strangest interpretation, because if anyone in a local church is not an angel, it surely is a pastor. A pastor-teacher. In fact, no teacher that I know of is an angel. But aside from all of these things, and I don't want to get into that right now, it's obvious that the things that come from the pulpit and the interpretations that come from the pulpit, prove that they are no angels. So, it's good to have an interpreting angel at hand who can give you an authoritative interpretation. They're not always so clear, because you know in the word of God, you've got to spend some time in the study of it. You're not going to find that everything is going to fall into your lap.

I want to tell you something, I've worked over this vision for many years. In fact I want to tell you something right now, because I think it will fit. I went back to some notes of mine in seminary, which I had taken under my Hebrew professor over twenty

years ago. He was a man by the name of Storey. He now is a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. And I studied this particular book under this man, and he was a graduate of our school, too. And so I went back to my notes thinking, “Perhaps there is some light in these old notes.” And do you know what I found in my notes taken when I was just a student? I found a little notation, “Storey is goofy here.” These are the words that I found in my notes. [Laughter] And so, if I seem that way to you this morning, I want to assure you that I’m not the only one who appears goofy in interpreting this last night vision that Zechariah had. It’s not an easy vision to interpret.

So let’s look now, at his interpretation. In the 5th verse the angel says, “Zechariah, I want you first of all to know that these are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.” This is not the first time that reference is made, in the Bible, to four spirits of the heavens. You who study the word of God know that in the 7th chapter of the Book of Daniel, we have a similar expression. Daniel sees the four spirits of the heavens go out, and he sees them work in the Mediterranean area, and out of the Mediterranean Sea, there arise four great beasts. The four great beasts are representative of the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires, down to the end of time. He speaks about the lion of Babylonia. He speaks about the bear of Medo-Persia, that arouse with three ribs in its mouth. He speaks about the leopard of Greece. And finally the fourth animal is so terrible that he can only describe it as being strong, exceedingly (notice the word strong), and diverse from all the others. Perhaps if Zechariah had been there he might have said, “That animal looks grizzled to me.” But at any rate, the four winds of heaven are apparently four angelic beings, which God uses in his conduct of the affairs of men. And so he says now, “These four chariots are the four winds of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. And Zechariah, to give you further details, the black horses, which are there, go forth into the north country.”

And the first thing you notice, of course, is “Well, where are the red?” Zechariah saw some chariots that were driven by red horses, or pulled by red horses. Where are they? Perhaps the reason for their omission, as students have noted, is because at this time Babylonia had already been destroyed, and there is no need for them to be mentioned now, and the red horses, or that chariot, signified God’s destruction of that great power. Let’s let it go, you may think I’m a little goofy here, but at least that satisfies me as to why the red horses are omitted in the further interpretation. He says, “The black horses, which are there, go forth into the north country.” And apparently, he refers here to the destruction of Medo-Persia, which shall soon come. And further, the white go forth after them. And since the Grecian empire ultimately included all of that empire, and were also to the north of Palestine, perhaps the reference here is to the destruction of the Grecian power. And finally he says, “And the dappled (or grizzled) go forth toward the south country.” The south country is Egypt. And as you study history, you will discover that the place where Israel first came into contact with Rome, was in Egypt. And furthermore, it was in Egypt that Rome first began its destruction of the Macedonian power. So, perhaps the reference here is to the power that goes forth to destroy the Romans. But he also seems to distinguish the grizzled and the strong, as if to suggest, in this last destruction of the government of Rome, or the empire of Rome, there are two aspects.

Now we know from the study of the Bible, that Rome was the world empire at the time that our Lord lived. We also believe, from the study of the prophetic word with the light that we have (and we do not have final light), that Rome shall, in some way, be revived, be restored to authority. That the headquarters of that kingdom shall exist in Babylon, as I have been trying to teach you, contrary to the teaching of some theologians, but I think it’s plainly the teaching of the word of God, and we saw it again in the 5th chapter of the Book of Zechariah. All you have to do is to look at the 17th and 18th of Revelation to realize it is true. But that the man who rules, or the Anti-Christ, will be a

Roman. That is, from the Roman empire. But his capital shall be in Babylon. It is very striking that Babylon was the capital of several of these empires, and if you'll remember, Alexander even wanted to make Babylon the capital of his, but he was prevented by his untimely death. So it seems to me that what Zechariah is told, to sum it up, is that God has designated his angelic authorities to go forth and to destroy the successive world empires that shall arise upon the earth, until finally, at the destruction of the last one, our Lord Jesus Christ shall come and shall establish the kingdom of God upon the earth.

That, in a nutshell, is the meaning of this last of the visions. It seems to comprehend, then, the whole program of God's working among the nations. His working during the times of the gentiles, when the gentiles, instead of the Jews, have authority over the face of the earth. So these eight night visions are designed to portray Israel's future, from the day of Cyrus, which, by the way, means “lord,” to the day of the greater than Cyrus, our Lord Jesus Christ. I think that the things that we see today, that are transpiring upon the earth, are political changes which are very significant. We have been talking about them, particularly the things that are happening in the near east. Isn't it striking that today we have so much stress upon a part of the world which was relatively insignificant twenty years ago?

I get, at my home, the *Near East Report*. Twenty-five years ago, no one would ever have wanted to have a report of the Near East. What would that mean? What would that mean to anyone? But today, the events of our civilization now seem to find their focus in the Near East, with all of the tremendous wealth, with all of the great political significance of that area. Now the things that we see upon the earth, are just the shadows of a sun dial, cast by the sun who is in heaven, our Father. And as we look at these things happening upon the earth, in order to really understand them, we must look into his word and seek to understand them in the light of what God has said. I do not think that there has ever been a time in our lifetime when there is more incentive for the study of the Scriptures. When there is a greater motivation to come to know the word of God.

And do not neglect the great prophetic portions of that word. They will give you strength of soul, and also an understanding. And give you a philosophy of history which is not simply a philosophy of history written by men, but one that is written by God, full of intelligence, full of significance, full of purpose, full of meaning, and very vital for every act of our everyday life.

Now I said, as I began, that grace and judgment are two sides of the divine face. We must not reject the one, the grace of God. If we reject that then we must accept the other, the judgment of God. For the wicked, there is no democracy like the democracy of sin and final judgment. Everyone must participate. And how important it is for us to turn to our Lord Jesus Christ while we have time. One of the great figures of World War I was a bishop. He was the chaplain of the British army; an evangelical, church of England minister, whose name was John Taylor Smith. Bishop Taylor Smith often traveled in this country too. And when he was in this country some years ago, at a meeting for the study of the word of God, while he was addressing the audience, he told a true story of some of his ecclesiastical friends. He said he was in a great cathedral in Britain, and that he was preaching, and in the midst of it, trying to emphasize his text, which that day was “Ye must be born again,” he turned to the rector of the cathedral who was sitting by his side, and he said, “Do you know you might even be a rector, and not be born again? And except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Then he turned to the arch-deacon, the bishop’s assistant, who was sitting in a stall, and he said, “You might be like the arch-deacon over here, sitting in his stall. You might be a man like that, and not be born again. And except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And then he said, “You might even be a bishop like me, and not be born again. And except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

He finished his message and he said a day or two later he received a letter. It was from the arch-deacon. He began by saying, “My dear Bishop, you have found me out.” He said, “I want to tell you that my religion has been nothing but a burden for me ever

since I became interested in it.” And you know, when I read that I thought about Isaiah chapter 46. The burdens of the ordinary religion, which does not have the vitality of Christianity. Which bears a man. And he confessed the fact that all of the trappings of the Anglican church, with all of its religiosity, and also with all of its truth in the thirty-nine articles, it had all been one gigantic burden to this great church leader. And oh, how true it is. It all is a burden, it all is something that we must carry, if the vitality of faith in Jesus Christ, and the power that he gives is not there. And he asked the Bishop Taylor Smith that he might speak with him. They met again and a few days later, after several hours of discussion, Bishop Taylor Smith said, “We were both upon our knees. And the burdens fell off of the back of the arch-deacon.” And he received the God who promises to carry us, even until we reach hoar hairs, or until we reach old age, and on into eternity.

Do you have this God, that carries you? Or do you have a kind of religion which is nothing but a burden? A burden of ritual, a burden of activity, a burden of duty, all designed, you think, to gain you acceptance before God. Is that the kind of truth that you have? Is it possible, even that as a Christian, your Christianity, vital in its core, make work itself out in a set of legalistic precepts which you think, that by observing them, they give you the vitality and reality of Christian life? Supernatural, impossible life, that only Christ can give? Oh, it is tremendously, that you realize that the God who we worship is a God who carries us, not whom we carry. Who bears our burdens, whom we do not carry as a burden. And if we refuse this God, we cannot escape judgment. There was a man who was a farmer; he was an unbeliever. He lived among believers, however. He wrote a letter to the local paper. He said, “I would like for you to know that this year, I planted my corn on Sunday.” He said, “I cultivated it on Sunday.” He said, “I harvested it on Sunday, and I sold it on Sunday. And I want you to know that I had more and better corn than anybody in the community.” The editor wrote back a very simple little word. He said, “God doesn’t settle his accounts in October.” He doesn’t really settle his accounts in September 1967. Sometimes he does; sometimes he waits a generation.

Sometimes he waits several generations, but ultimately, he settles his accounts. Oh listen, if you're in this audience and you have not believed in Jesus Christ, do not waste any time. But in your heart, at this moment, look off to the cross and the brazen serpent, and say, “Thank you Lord, for giving Jesus Christ to die for me. I take him as my personal savior.”

May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” for us, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the blessed possession of all who have believed, the love of God the Father, be and abide with all who know the impossible supernatural life, in sincerity. And Father, we pray that Thou would give no rest nor peace to those in this audience who are without him. May accounts with Thee be settled now, before the final reckoning takes place. For Jesus' sake. Amen.