



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 11:1-17

“Israel’s Rejection of Her Shepherd”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Zechariah chapter 11, as we continue and draw near the end of our studies of this great prophecy, something of a compressed Isaiah. Chapter 11, we’re going to read the entire chapter and since we do not have any announcements I’m going to make a few comments as we go along. So I won’t have to make them later on in the message. Chapter 11, now let me just remind you, in case you have forgotten, that the book of Zechariah is divided into several parts. The first six chapters give us prophetic visions, which the prophet had. The 7th and 8th chapters are devoted to the answer of, to a question about fasting and some related matters. And then chapters 9 through 14 contain two prophetic burdens. Each of these burdens is three chapters long. In chapter 9, verse 1 he wrote, “The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach,” and now in chapter 12 and verse 1 he will write, “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel.” And so we have two burdens, of three chapters. In the first burden, chapters 9, 10 and 11, the stress rests upon the judgment of God upon Israel, for their disobedience, and specifically their rejection of their Messiah. In the last burden the stress rests upon the blessing that God is going to give them when they turn to their Messiah. And in the next message Sunday morning to come, the Lord willing, we shall look at the 10th verse

in which we read, “And they shall look upon him whom they have pierced. And they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.”

Today in the 11th chapter then, we are concluding the first burden of judgment, and so the theme is the theme of the First Advent, the rejection of the Messiah, and all that that entails. Now the 1st verse, and remember he is a prophet. He does not write as our newspaper reporters do today. He has a little bit of the prophetic touch in him, and consequently he speaks in ecstasy. And we should expect that his words are not as clear as words that we use in ordinary conversation. But when we discover the meaning of this type of speech we discover that it goes far beyond, in significance, the ordinary every day speech that we use. That’s why prophecy is a good thing, and not a bad thing. And a prophet is a good guy, and not a bad guy, really. Verse 1, “Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.”

Now I must confess, I hadn’t the slightest idea what that meant when I read it the first time in the English text. And the reason is that the word “of the vintage” doesn’t mean a whole lot to us today. The Hebrew word really means “inaccessible”. So let’s just translate it, “for the inaccessible forest has come down.” Now you can see what the prophet is doing, he is looking to the north of the land, Lebanon, he sees a destruction that comes down through the land. If we just knew the geography we would understand. And I must confess that when I read these things I have to go and look at my map too, just like anyone else. And we can see as the destruction comes from Lebanon down into the land to Bashan and finally, it will reach Jordan. Verse 2, or verse 3, “There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: (now the glory of the shepherd is their lush pasture land) a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God.”

Now you see, the Lord is speaking to Zechariah and he is a prophet, and frequently prophets were called upon to act out their messages. In other words, the prophets would have been good at charades. And so now, Zechariah is called to act out the message. Now whether he does this in vision or whether he did it actually before a group of his disciples or not, the text does not tell us. It is most likely that this is something that came to him in ecstatic vision, as prophets normally received their message, but it might be the other.

“Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; (that is the flock that is destined for slaughter) Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: (that is from the sale of the flock) and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, (and I want to go back and retranslate if I may, for now Zechariah is describing his response to his commission. So let's translate it as I think the Hebrew text should be rendered, “So I fed the flock of slaughter”) even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, (that word really means I lost all patience with them, and this is God speaking) and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples (that is the Gentiles, I agreed that they should not disturb Israel, but now I have broken that covenant) And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.”

You know, wherever you are you always have a few people who understand God, that’s the principle of election, free grace. Wherever you go, you always find some who respond to the word of God. This is one of the things that marks our Christianity as the truth, it is universal. All other systems are not. Now verse 12,

“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forget about it, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. (now you will immediately recognize that this is an important section for the New Testament, for this is the section around which Matthew builds his account of the suffering and the sacrifice of Christ, and the treachery of Judas Iscariot) And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. (now, the Hebrew is very expressive, “the magnificence of the price,” but it’s all very ironic. Just think, the Messiah, the price is thirty pieces of silver) And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. (and now here we have come to the most terrible section of the chapter) And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. (a shepherd of nothingness) For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, (does that mean that the Antichrist is a Jew?) which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. (what a vivid picture of a false shepherd of the flock) Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.”

He should have used his arm to defend the flock. He should have used his eye to have the oversight of the flock, for their good. Because he did not, a selfish idol shepherd of nothingness, he shall suffer from the hand of God. May God bless this reading from his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we are so grateful to Thee that we are able to open up the Old Testament Scriptures and read them and reflect upon them. We thank Thee that these Scriptures were in the hands of the apostles and formed the substructure of their teaching. And we thank Thee that the apostle’s doctrine is that which we, as believers in Christ, desire to follow. And so as we read these wonderful sections of the Old Testament, enable us, oh Father, to understand them as Thou wouldst have us to understand them. And may the great practical lessons, that come out, to us through them, grip us this day.

And may, oh Father, the great issue, our assessment of Jesus Christ, come home to us also. Enable us to ponder our own lives in the light of who he is and what he has done. And enable us oh Lord, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to reach an evaluation that honors Thee, that provokes the response of love from Thee, because the response is produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for each one present today for all that is represented in this auditorium.

We pray oh God, that the needs of our hearts may be met. We think of some who are unable to be here, because of illness. And wilt Thou Lord minister to them, and strengthen them, and use these times as times of edification and growth in grace. Supply the needs of this congregation.

We thank Thee oh God, for what Thou hast done, but we desire Lord to move forward in dependence upon Thee. And so wilt Thou guide us and direct us and Lord if it should please Thee, to use us in a way that will honor Thee, in Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. Oh so work in our midst, that many may be touched with the glorious good news of Jesus Christ. Strip from us Lord the things that would hinder, the weights that so easily disturb us in our race toward the goal of the glory of God. And we pray that Thou wilt fit us, and then use us to Thy glory.

We pray especially for the young people in this auditorium. And I ask oh God, that Thy hand may be upon them, and upon their future. And for the young

couples who are here, whose lives are so bright with promise. Oh Father, as they begin in their family life, may Jesus Christ assume his proper place of pre eminence. And then Lord, for those of us who are older, in the time that Thou dost give us, oh enable us Lord to be faithful to Thee. Now we ask Thy blessing on the remainder of this service. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today is “Israel’s Rejection of Her Shepherd”. The history of Israel is the history of a tragedy. And the history of Israel contains the tragedy of history. The history of a tragedy is the story of Israel’s rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the story of a rejection that not only was a rejection once in time, but really was a rejection down through the ages.

It was very interesting to read in the newspapers when Israel went into the city of Jerusalem recently, to notice the differing comments from Israel itself. One rabbi said, “We are entering the messianic era,” as he stood at the Wailing Wall. He said in effect, the promises of the Old Testament have been fulfilled. The Messiah has come in our possession of the city of Jerusalem. Now that of course, is blindness. But then on the other hand, there are some very, very orthodox Jews in Jerusalem who looked at this in an entirely different way. The Orthodox Rabbi Blau, one of the leaders of this small group of very orthodox Jews in the land, said that the state of Israel itself is an affront to God. It is a grave sin. It is faithlessness to have such a country. His reasoning was very simple. “If you study the traditions of Israel,” he said, “the traditions teach us that when Israel becomes a nation, it becomes a nation by the hand of God, not by the hand of man. The Zionists have brought the nation into being and they have brought it into being as men, and if we are not willing to wait for God to bring Israel into existence, then we are committing sin against God. Israel,” so the Israelite says, the Israeli, “Israel is an affront to God. The Messiah has not arrived.” And so too of course, this man is blind.

One says that as we enter the city, the messianic promises are fulfilled. He is blind. Another says we must wait for the Messiah to come, God shall establish Israel. Partially right, partially wrong, but blind. The Messiah has come. The tragedy of history is her crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And I don't think that there is any more vivid expression of the terrible nature of the rejection of the Lord Jesus than the words that come from the mouth of the Lord himself, as he perceives what is sure to come to pass, outside the city of Jerusalem. He broke down and wept. He cried, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee," you see the rejection has been going on all along, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you ye shall not see me hence forth till you shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And so we look at all of the years of Israel's wanderings, their persecutions, their trials, their tribulations. Some of them of course, brought upon them by Christians. Most brought upon them by false Christians, but some even by true Christians who misunderstood the teaching of the word of God. And it's no wonder that when the term Christian is used among the Jews, that they think of all of their persecutions that they have suffered down through the years. Some of course, have seen that it was not the evangelical who was enlightened who did, but nevertheless that's a burden that Christianity has to bear. But Israel has still severer troubles to come.

The Scriptures foretell, not only their rejection of the true Messiah, but the Scriptures say that their attitude to God is such that he must satisfy the longings of their hearts by sending them a false messiah. And the time is coming when the false messiah shall come and they shall surprisingly, it would seem, respond to him. As our Lord Jesus said in the 5th chapter of the gospel of John and in the 43rd verse, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will

receive.” And so the time is coming in the future, when Israel’s troubles, and persecutions and tribulations, shall reach an intensity that even Israel has never dreamed existed.

Now this is all pertinent to Zechariah chapter 11. For in chapter 11 the prophet, in prophetic vision playing charades, I wonder if Red Skelton would have made a good prophet, but at any rate Zechariah plays charades and he pantomimes the rejection of the true shepherd of Israel. And then he pantomimes the coming of the false shepherd. And so that’s really the subject of Zechariah chapter 11. He begins with a description of a devastation that sweeps down over the land from the north. Now the things that happened to Israel in the last days happened from the north. That is, the persecutions and tribulations of the tribulation have their origin primarily in that direction. There are of course, other interplays of movements across the land from the south as well as the east. But it is from the north that the Antichrist comes. And so in lively poetic imagery, God’s judgment is pictured in the first three verses of this chapter as coming to the land. It begins in Lebanon to the north, it moves down finally to Jordan itself. A question that we want to ask as we read these verses is, “What is the time of the prophet’s statements? Just exactly what is he speaking about specifically?” And our best identification I think, is to take these three verses as portraying the judgments of God that come down upon the land and reach their climax in seventy A.D. But they of course, are typical of climatic judgments of the end times. But I do notice, that in the 6th verse we read of a king, and since that king is most likely a Roman ruler it’s probably best then, to look at this as the judgment of God that has come down upon the land and reaches its climax in the Roman rule over Israel.

Now the question that arises is, why is Israel under the judgment of God? And that moves us into the second of the movements of the prophet in the 11th chapter, because in the 4th through the 14th verses now, he will speak of the rejection of the good shepherd. And he will say the cause for the judgment of God which comes upon the land in the past, in the present, and also in the future, the cause of that judgment is

unbelief that leads ultimately to the colossal crime of the rejection of Israel’s own Messiah. And so in ecstatic vision, I think Zechariah was an ecstatic vision, he acts out the parable of the shepherd who loves the flock but is spurned. To put it in the words of our Lord Jesus, he said, “He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He loved them. He wanted them to acknowledge him as their shepherd. He wanted them to say, “This is our king.” And he yearned within his heart that they might turn to him. But instead they spurned him. They rejected him, as a matter of fact, they said they would rather have a Roman ruler, than their own shepherd. So Zechariah’s going to act out now, this rejection. And let’s notice a few of the details. You’ll notice first in the 4th verse, he receives his commission, “Thus saith the Lord my God feed the flock that is destined for slaughter.” That’s Zechariah’s commission in his prophetic ecstasy. So he as the Messiah, as the representative of the Lord, now is going to act. And we’re going to see the kind of response he gets too.

But before he speaks specifically of his response he speaks about the condition, this culpable condition that exists in Israel. So he says, “Feed the flock that is destined for the slaughter.” But the whose possessors slay them and hold themselves not guilty. The possessors are the nations, the Gentile nations. “The possessors slay them and hold themselves not guilty, and they that sell them,” a terrible thing to think of it, but the true flock of God potentially, Israel of God, is a slave kingdom. And they were so. We have records that Jews were sold for five hundred dollars. Not a bad price, one might say. Now Zechariah speaks about that. He says, “And is they that sell them say blessed be the Lord for I am rich.”

In other words, what I have done when I have sold one of the members of the flock is to get rich and the Lord is to be thanked for it. You know I wonder, if we really had a list of all the things that the Lord had been thanked for, it would be a very shocking thing. And I might say that today that would be true too. Now lots of Christians thank God for things that I know are wrong. I know they’re wrong because the Bible teaches

that they’re wrong. And yet they thank God for it. He’s been thanked for lots of things for which he did not accept that thanksgiving, and this is one, “Blessed be the Lord for I am rich, and their own shepherds pitied them not.” And you know, it’s a terrible thing, but this is true always. It’s true in the Old Testament times, it’s true in the New Testament times, that the men upon whom God lays his hands to be the shepherds of the flock often do not shepherd the flock. They do not care for the flock. They are interested only in the things that the flock possesses. All said, I do not desire yours, I desire you. And that is the heart of the true shepherd.

And then the most terrible judgment of all I guess, is not only to have the nations disavow Israel, not only to have their own shepherds disavow them, but to have the Lord say he will have no pity on them. That’s the terrible judgment, for the people have responded to these false shepherds. “For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land saith the Lord, but Lo I will deliver the men every one into his neighbors hand and into the hand of his king and they shall smite the land and out of their hand I will not deliver them.”

Now this reached its climax I think, in seventy A.D. when the Romans came in and took the city, and God turned over the city to the Romans and then turned over the Jews to themselves. Have you ever read some of the things that happened when Jerusalem was taken in seventy A.D.? The Israelites were thrown into internees and warfare, the seditious in the city, to fought with the Romans and fought with the simple humble Israelites. And finally, when the siege of the Romans under Vespasian and Titus reached its climax, men were eating rats in the city of Jerusalem. Now that’s a better kind of rat program than our government has ever developed, but it’s not the kind I would want to foist on anyone. Can you imagine the people of God, the people to whom God gave the great promises of the Old Testament killing rats and eating them? And that’s not all, they ate girdles. And believe it or not, they ate their shoes. How would you like to

sit down to a meal of barbequed shoe? [Laughter] Barbequed shoe leather, but that’s what they ate, because leather apparently had some kind of nourishment in it.

There is a story that Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells of a woman by the name of Mary, now I have known women by the name of Mary to be rather tough, [Laughter] but this is one that does not fit the mold, I assure you. But Mary was the daughter of a man by the name of Eleazar, and she lived in a little place called Beth Zub, as I remember. And finally, conditions reached such a place in the city that she looked at her little infant, whom she was nursing, and she said, “Why should I raise this infant for the Romans?” And so she took the infant and she slew the infant and she roasted the infant. And she ate half of the infant. She saved half, she wanted to have some more food. But someone smelled the cooking of the meat, and some of the seditious who were roaming up and down the streets of Jerusalem came in and demanded some of the food. She said, “All right, I’ll give it to you.” And she reached over in a place where she had hidden the meat, the half of the baby that was left, and she brought it out and she said, “This is my baby. I have just killed my baby and I’ve just eaten half of it, and I want you to share it with me too.” And these terrible men blanched and went out trembling, so Josephus says. Well this was the state to which Jerusalem came. And they came because of their rejection of the Lord Jesus. And it’s all set forth in the word of God. “And they shall smite and I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor’s hand.” And then you’ll notice down in the 9th verse, “That is to be cut off, let it be cut off and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.” God’s word is always fulfilled to the very details, to the very details, and often, when it is judgment to the very gruesome details too.

Now, Zechariah begins his work in the 7th verse. And the first thing that he does is to pantomime the last effort of the Messiah to recover the lost nation. And so verse 7 resumes verse 4, and as I said in the Scripture reading it should be rendered, “And so I tended,” or “So I fed the flock of slaughter.” The prophet begins his work now, and he begins his work in vision. And he takes his two staves. He calls one of these staves

Beauty and the other he calls Bands. These two staves signify the tender ministry of the shepherd and then the staff, Bands, that signifies the unifying ministry of the shepherd. Now we had a wonderful lesson in Sunday school this morning from Bill McCrae, and one of the topics was unity. And so here is a picture of the shepherd, who ministers as a loving, tender shepherd desires of keeping the flock together. And he has the two staves, or two staves. We sang this morning Psalm 23 in verse 4. And you’ll remember in Psalm 23 it says, “Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” Shepherds ordinarily have one staff. It’s a crooked kind of staff and that’s why we speak of the shepherd’s crook. With it, he can maneuver the sheep. But sometimes the shepherds had two staves. They had one that was crooked which they used to control the sheep, and then they had another staff which they used to beat off the enemies of the flock. And that’s the picture here, and so the shepherd, Zechariah, acting out, pantomiming, his story which he has to tell to Israel. He now takes the two staves, one signifying the tender ministry of the shepherd, the other the unifying ministry, and he feeds the flock, “And I fed the flock.” Now in the 8th verse he says, “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month.”

Now commentators have had a terrible time with this statement. Do you know that you can count forty different interpretations of, “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month.” So I’m going to give you the true interpretation. [Laughter] No, I have no assurance really that my interpretation is true. But the mass of the commentators who seem to be right on other things suggest that probably, the three shepherds are references to the three offices in Israel or at least the three groups who control things in Israel. And perhaps, just for the sake of trying to fit it in with the text, we can call the three shepherds the kings, the priests, and the prophets. And so we have a statement then, that at a particular critical venture in Israel’s time, that mediatorial offices of prophet, priest and king shall be cut off. And that of course, is exactly what happened. Even if that is not exactly what Zechariah means. For when the Lord Jesus was crucified, and when Israel rejected the Messiah, the Messiah rejected them and their whole economy came to

its grinding halt because it had reached its end. It was to point forward to the new age in which we are living. And so the prophets of Israel stopped. There are no more prophets of Israel. There are no more prophets in the church either. But the prophets of Israel stopped. There are no more priests, for the priesthood has been done away with. The king is in heaven, not upon Earth. And he will not come to the earth until Israel acknowledges that he is their true king.

Now the text goes on to say, “And my soul loathed them.” Isn’t that a terrible thing? To realize that God can actually say that my soul has been cut off with respect to them, I have reached the place where I have no more patience with them. Now God is a very patient person. In fact, one of the virtues that he loves to inculcate in those who belong to him is the virtue of patience and long suffering. But there comes a time when patience and long suffering reaches its end. And it reached its end with God the Father in heaven, and he said, “My soul lost all patience with them.” That’s what that word loathed means. And then, “Their soul also,” now you know this word in the Hebrew text is one of the most vivid words in all of the book of Zechariah. “And their soul was nauseated with me, nauseated with me.” Think of that, they were nauseated at the thought of God. “And therefore I lost all patience with them.”

Now I don’t think this can refer to anything but finally, when Jesus Christ stood before Pontius Pilate, and Pilate brought the Lord Jesus out before the multitude and said, “Behold your king.” And in the 19th chapter of the gospel of John we have the response of the nation. And this is what they say, in words that are so terrible in their ultimate significance that it is very difficult to do them justice, “They cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. (we’re nauseated with this character, Jesus of Nazareth) Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”

Now, you don’t realize how terrible that is until you realize that God called Abraham, and called Israel out of the blackness and darkness of heathendom, and he

gave them those marvelous promises and set them here as a theocratic nation. That is, a nation that was to walk forth under God. They were to have no king, no king whatsoever. Their king was to be the Lord, the Lord. Of course, they made the mistake of wanting a king. They wanted to be like everybody else. Everybody else has a king, why shouldn't we have a king? That's like everybody else has a pastor, why shouldn't Believers Chapel have a pastor? [Laughter] No, I'm serious, I'm very serious. You see, it's very easy for us to turn aside from God's best, because no one else is like this. Yes it is. I challenge you, I challenge you to take the word, and read it for yourself, and then, oh may God give us the grace to follow his word, in spite of what people say. That's the place of blessing really.

But you know when the nation said, “We have no king but Caesar.” They were actually denying themselves. They stood on the basis of the fact that God had called them out to be a nation under God, under Jehovah. And so when Jehovah the Son stands before them they say, “We have no king but Caesar. We absolutely deny our relationship to the theocracy.” Of course, mind you, they didn't put it that way. That's what their actions really meant though. And so when they said, “We have no king but Caesar,” they abolished their own position before God. There's nothing left to do but for God to judge them. So if today, they have no king but Caesar, tomorrow the prophets say, they will have no sacrifice. And that's what happened, they will have no temple, they will have no priesthood, they will be a nation that is lost and wandering to the four corners of the earth. And that is exactly what has happened. And so Adam-like, the soul of the nation died when they said, “We have no king but Caesar.” And the body was destroyed in seventy A.D. when they were scattered to the four corners of the earth.

You know, we are inclined to look at Israel and say, this doesn't have any relationship to me. But I want to say to you that this has the most direct application to us. For you see, God has created us. And he has created us to glorify him. Yes, that's what the Westminster Confession of Faith says, that's what the Catechism says, “Man's

chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Now not because I was a Presbyterian, do I believe that. I believe that because it's the teaching of the word of God, that I have been created to be an instrument for the glory for God. And I do believe that when I deny Jesus Christ I am denying the very basis of my existence, my human existence. I am in effect saying I am not the human being that God created. And that's why, when I deny Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior, I cannot help but ultimately wind up in utter opposition to him and apostasy from him. And Israel as a nation denied themselves when they abolished the theocracy and we too, when we deny our Lord Jesus Christ, we abolish our own way of and place before God.

How wonderful it is to know, that in wonderful grace he has given us a savior through whom we may be rightly related to God. And all we need to do is to simply say, "Thank you Lord for Jesus Christ who loved me and gave himself for me. And now I come back into wonderful relationship to this God and the purposes for which I have been created are now potentially possible in my life, all on the basis of grace." Grace, mind you, free, free, it doesn't cost anything. Don't have to join the church, don't have to pray through, don't have to be baptized, don't have to sit at the Lord's table, you don't have to do good works, you don't have to be educated, don't have to come from a good family, just believe in Jesus Christ. And I am constituted righteous before God. It's so hard for people to understand that, but that's God's word. All God wanted Israel to do was to just say, "We're helpless, we cannot please Thee, oh God we turn to Thee our great shepherd." And that great loving heart in heaven would have gone out to them in any way that would have met their needs. And that's what he will do for us.

You know, this summer I was preaching in Portland, and a woman came up to me after I said a few words about grace and she said, "I want to tell you a little story about a friend of mine." She said, "I have a friend with whom I ride to work every morning and my friend is a Seventh Day Adventist." And by the way, I do not mean by what I say that all Seventh Day Adventists are lost. I imagine that some of them are saved, but most of

them are legalists in one way or another. She said, “We ride to work every morning, and the other day I had a new New Testament in my home and I was reading it and it was a New Testament in modern English and I was getting a great blessing out of it and I began to talk about it to my friend. And so finally, my friend got interested in it and she said, ‘Please let me see your New Testament, let me read it.’ And she said finally, ‘I promise you I’ll read every book in that New Testament except the Epistle to the Galatians, if you let me read it.’”

And so my friend came to me and said, “You know Dr. Johnson,” she’s very simple minded about it, she said, “You know, I don’t know whether I ought to give her that New Testament or not. There’s just something within me that says, ‘Don’t give her that New Testament.’ What would you do?” I’m pretty nasty at times, as you know, I said, “As far as I’m concerned, I think I wouldn’t give her any book but the Epistle to the Galatians, [Laughter] because it’s obvious that the one thing she needs is the Epistle to the Galatians. And this is her way of dodging the issue.” Now isn’t that human, isn’t that the way we read the Bible so often? We read what we want to read. But what we don’t want to see, we pass that by. And this principle of grace, oh how difficult it is to really grasp it.

And now, Zechariah speaks about the calamities of national discipline in verses 9 through 11. He says,

“Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. (and so the famines came and the violence came and the civil strife came, and Zechariah still acting out his prophecies says,) I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. (the meaning of course, is that God had covenanted with the Gentiles, that is, he had said in his own mind they shall not hurt Israel, they shall not, as a wild boar, come in among my sheep. But now I am breaking my covenant and the Gentiles are going to be given freedom to persecute Israel in judgment for their unbelief. And so the 11th verse says,) And it was broken in that day:

and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.”
The remnant understood.

Now in the 12th verse we come to the charade of the rejection of the Messiah. It’s near the end of the ministry of the shepherd and so, he stands before the group now and he says, “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forget it.” I’m not interested in your money, I’m interested in the expression of your evaluation and assessment of me and my ministry. “If ye think good, give me my price; if not,” don’t give me anything. Could take a long time out and talk about the relationship of money to the shepherd, won’t do that. Now notice the response. “So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.” Now let’s stop for a moment because we’re inclined to think thirty pieces of silver, boy thirty nuggets, I’d like to have that too. But these were thirty shekels. I don’t know exactly how much this was worth. I remember many years ago when I was in the insurance business in Alabama, hearing Herbert Lockess speak on the subject of this text. He entitled his message, “Selling Christ for a Suit of Clothes”. For he said that’s what thirty pieces of silver would have bought, a suit of clothes. Now I don’t think that thirty pieces of silver would have bought a suit of clothes in Hart Shaffner & Marx. As a matter of fact, in the Old Testament we are told that thirty pieces of silver is the price that was put upon a slave that had been gored to death by an ox. In other words, it was the price of a slave, the lowest form of humanity, thirty pieces of silver.

The text says, “And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them.” That’s our way of saying throw it to the dogs. The potter, just an ordinary man, he labored in a occupation that was very lowly, and furthermore, he labored in a part of the valley which was almost unclean and so the thirty pieces of silver are to be cast to the potter, a goodly price. “And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.” Now you know in the New Testament account, in Matthew chapter 27, when the time comes for Judas to betray our Lord Jesus Christ, he betrays our Lord Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. That was Judas’ price,

that was his price for Jesus Christ. What’s your price? Really, what would it take for you to betray Jesus Christ? What would it really take for you to deny that he is your Lord? Some worldly ambition, some place in status in your business. All of these things are good. If I were in business I’d want to be the best in my business. But you see, it’s a matter of relationship. It’s a matter of what comes first. Does your business come first, men? Does Jesus Christ come first? Some of the women are saying, “Amen.” Does your family come first? Does your daughter come first, your son, your family, your pleasure, your hobby? What’s your price?

Many years ago Harold Syngen was standing in the chapel of Keble College, Keble College in Oxford, he was looking at Holman Hunt’s picture, “The Light of The World”. And as he was looking and had been meditating upon that wonderful picture, he heard the door open in the chapel, and he heard a guide bringing in a group of people he was showing them around. He had a very strident voice, Mr. Syngen said, and finally he came up to where Mr. Syngen was standing off to the side and he had his group by him, and he looked up at the picture, “The Light of The World” and he said, as he described the picture, and finally he concluded by saying, “The original of this was sold for five thousand pounds.” Mr. Syngen, moved by the Holy Spirit, stepped forward immediately in the silence that followed that statement and said, “I beg your pardon, but I would like to suggest that the original of this was sold for thirty pieces of silver.” There was not a sound, not a word was said, as they filed out. What’s your price? What’s the price that you put on Jesus Christ? Have you ever thought about it?

May I tell you a story, and I’m going to tell you this story and I’m going to apologize for it as I tell it. But I don’t know of any story that illustrates so much what I’m talking about. I’m not sure it’s really the kind of story I ought to tell on Sunday morning. But you can read it in a number the books, and Christian books. An old man saw a beautiful young girl. He had a lot of money. He went up to her, he said, “I’d like for you to spend the night with me. Would you do it?” She said, “No.” He said, “Would you do

it for a hundred thousand dollars?" She said, "Yes." "Fifty thousand?" "Yes" "Ten thousand?" "Yes" "Five hundred?" "What do you think I am?" He said, "I think we have already established that. We're now haggling over the price." What's your price? You see, if we have any price we're traitors to Christ. Any price, we're traitors. It wouldn't have been better if it had been three hundred pieces of silver. It wouldn't have been better if it were three thousand pieces of silver. It wouldn't have been better if it were three million pieces of silver. They had a price. And Jesus Christ does not want us to have a price, not any price. We are married to him, married to him. That's why, as Bill was pointing out to us in the class this morning, that James can speak of us as, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses," because we have prices. Most of us have a price. I hesitate to say it, but it's true. I probably have a price. I get down by my bed so often and say, "Oh God, oh God, keep me faithful to Jesus Christ because I know I'm so unfaithful." And I think that's the thing that God wants of us. At least that's the way I read the New Testament. He knows we all have prices. But he wants us to lean upon him. So that he can make us the kind of person who doesn't have a price.

Now in the 14th verse the prophet says, "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." And that's what happened in seventy A.D., for Israel was scattered to the four corners of the earth and it's a nation no more. Caiaphas said, "If we don't crucify Jesus Christ the Romans will come and take away our people and take away our nation." Well that's exactly what happened. When you have a price that's what happens. When you have a price, judgment comes. And they had a price, and so judgment came. And so to escape what they felt was a terrible danger, they committed suicide and plunged themselves into the judgment of God, and that's what we do when we have a price, exactly what we do.

Now the remainder of the chapter is horrible. You can put the church age between verses 14 and 15. And now we look on to the future. By the way, the other day I read in the paper that belief in the afterlife among the Jews has reached the place now

that only seventeen percent of them believe in an afterlife. Fifteen years ago, thirty-seven percent did. Now only seventeen percent believe in an afterlife. It’s no wonder that the judgments of God are going to fall upon them, but they’re going to fall on us too, when we do not respond to God’s word.

And so Zechariah now, if I may sum it up, pantomimes the false shepherd now and of course, the thing that Zechariah speaks about is ultimately bound up in the coming of the Antichrist. The one whom Daniel calls, “The little horn, the desolator,” the one whom Paul calls, “the man of sin, the son of perdition” the one whom John calls in the book of Revelation, “The beast”, he’s the false shepherd. He’s the last and final manifestation of the shepherds who do not feed the flock, they feed on the flock. They do not feed the flock, they fleece the flock. These are all of the false shepherds down through the years, who have not fed God’s people with the word of God, but have fed the flock with that which is falsehood and with the other hand have taken from the flock that which they possessed. And you can put in that line of succession all men down through the years who have denied the truthfulness of God’s word, down to the present day. And I’m afraid the bishop, whom we’ve spoken about several times, belongs there. But all of these men, terrible though they may be, are as nothing to the false shepherd who comes in the future, the Antichrist, and who plunders the flock of God until finally, he is destroyed by the breath of Jesus Christ at his second coming.

This is a terrible chapter. It’s a chapter that caused Israel, I’m sure, to search their hearts. It should cause us to search ours. If you’re in this audience this morning and you have not believed in Jesus Christ, we remind you that you shall never fulfill your destiny as a human being until you put your trust in Jesus Christ and are born again, regenerated, given new life. And our great God in heaven is just waiting to give you that new life, if you’ll simply turn to the one who died for you and say, “Thank you Lord, I know I’m lost. I know I have a price. I know I’m wicked, but you’ve died for my wickedness and now Lord save me, by Thy grace.” And he will do it. Don’t you want to be saved? Don’t you

want to have this life? Don’t you want to know what it is to be in right relationship to God? May God help you to make that decision. And then, if you’re a Christian, will you think this week about, give me my price. Shall we stand for the benediction,

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who so loved us that he gave himself for us, our good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit and the love of God, be in abide with all who know him in sincerity, the poor of the flock. And oh God, for some who may not yet know Thee, oh give them no rest nor peace until they rest in him we ask. For his sake and for Thy glory. Amen.