



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 12:1-14

“The Conversion of Israel”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading is in the 12th chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah. We're reading the entire chapter, Zechariah chapter 12. We're drawing near the end of our study of this prophetic book. And I hope that you have enjoyed it, at least half as much as I have. Beginning with the 1st verse, and remember from our studies last week, this prophecy is divided into three great sections. The first 6 chapters are largely visions, which the prophet received from the Lord. In chapters 7 and 8 we have an answer to a question concerning fasting, which was brought to him. And then in chapters 9 through 14 there are two prophetic burdens. And each one of these burdens takes three chapters in the book, so that today as we begin in chapter 12 and verse 1, we have come to the last of the burdens, and you will notice that the prophet begins with that word. The first burden stressed the judgment that would come upon Gentiles in Israel's deliverance, that is, their future deliverance. The last burden stresses the deliverance amidst the judgments of the last days. We begin reading with verse 1,

“The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when

they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day (now you will notice as you read through these last three chapters that this expression “in that day” occurs well over a dozen times, about fifteen or sixteen times. In the prophetic word and especially in this book, it has to do with the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ when he establishes his kingdom upon the earth, and so, “in that day” is that prophetic day of the future) And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; (now that means of course, that Judah and Jerusalem shall be the means for the destruction of the enemies of the Lord in that time) and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, (perhaps because they are defenseless) that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. (and you remember from the studies that we have had in various sections of the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and his pre-incarnate days when he ministered to Israel, and to individuals, before his incarnation. The coming of the angel of Jehovah and his ministry among the people before, his incarnation, was designed to prepare them for that great event when God became, or came among us, as a man in the person of Jesus Christ, now verse 9,) And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will

seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.” May God bless this reading of his holy, inspired word, let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege, which is before us today, the privilege to meet in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to listen to Thy word. We thank Thee for the power of the word of God. We thank Thee that it is living, that it is sharper than any two edged sword, that it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And we know Lord that it is this word with which we have to do. We thank Thee for the living word who has come, a word from God, the revelation of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that he has revealed to us all that God is, and all that God can do for us. And we thank Thee for the fact that this revelation is sure and certain, because he himself is the word of God.

And we remember that the apostles wrote concerning him, “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” And so Lord, we want to worship and adore Thee for the gift of the Son of God who is himself very God of very God. And we acknowledge that it is only through him that we have any right to approach Thee. We know Lord we could never approach Thee through our own merits.

And so impress this upon us, and impress upon us the solemnity of the privilege before us today. May in this meeting we sense the voice of the Spirit of God as he speaks to us. We know Lord that there are many in this auditorium with great needs. And some perhaps are troubled and distressed, and do not know where to turn. We thank Thee that we are able to point them to Thee. And then Lord, we pray that as Thou hast said in Thy word, that Thou wilt make good the promises, for Thou art able to do that which Thou hast promised. And so wilt Thou minister to us, and comfort those who need to be comforted, and strengthen those who need to be strengthened, and minister consolation to those who are down hearted.

And for those Lord who are finding it difficult to know the way, wilt Thou show them the one who is the way, the truth and the life, our Lord Jesus Christ. And may, oh Father, there be a great opening of heart and of mind, as we listen to the word in this meeting today. We commit Thee assembly to Thee. Pray Thy blessing upon it. May this church oh God, have Thy hand upon us for good. Wilt Thou supply all of the needs that exist. Above all, we pray that Thou wilt guide and direct us and make us a useful instrument in Thy hands. We pray that above all, Jesus Christ shall be honored and glorified and that each one of us who comes into this meeting may sense his presence, and also the fact that those gathered here desire to make him supreme in their lives. We know Lord, some of the shams and hypocrisies of our hearts, beyond realities that often exist within them, when we speak of the need of reality. And so we pray that Thou wilt wipe away the façade and hypocrisy, and enable us truly to put Thee first. We commit our meeting to Thee today in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today is the conversion of Israel. And of course, it is portrayed in the section which we have read for our Scripture reading today. One of the supreme miracles of history is just this conversion of Israel, the national conversion of Israel to Jesus of Nazareth. I think in perhaps the most touching scene that is recorded in

all of the word of God, the time shall come when Israel as a nation, shall turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and with one accord shall say, as Nathaniel did when he too owned his own king of Israel, many centuries ago, “Rabbi Thou art the Son of God Thou art the King of Israel.” And the fact that Israel shall some day turn to the Savior Jesus Christ, and own him as the one whom they have crucified, as their Jehovah, is interesting in the light of the continuing debate over Israel’s guilt of deicide, or the murder of God. You open up your newspapers and your periodicals, and from time to time you see this subject brought up, again and again. Was Israel guilty of deicide, as certain of the Christian groups have charged?

I notice that even this week, in the latest issue of *Time Magazine*, this subject again comes up. With the chief justice of Israel’s supreme court, who has just written an article in a law review. And the point of this review is that Israel is not guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as a matter of fact, the Sanhedrin really desired to prevent our Lord Jesus from being crucified. Well now, I don’t want to debate the illogic of that article which considers certain features of the New Testament record without considering all, and misinterpreting much of that to which it refers. That’s not really important. The thing that I want you to notice is the fact that men are still concerned about guilt for Jesus Christ’s death. It’s rather a strange thing to me that this should still be upon the conscience of anyone, something an ancient, a fact of ancient history, nineteen hundred years ago. But that very fact testifies to this, that God has not allowed men to forget that we have crucified our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And Israel is guilty, but the Gentiles also are guilty. And men shall never forget this, for the time is coming when those, and that includes all of us, Gentile and Jew, when those who have not responded to him shall be faced again, with this question of the death of Jesus Christ. It is upon the conscience of mankind. And that is the only way in which we can explain the fact that men today are still debating that, with some vehemence.

Now, the passage that we're looking at today is in the last burden of the prophecy of Zechariah. And as I mentioned last week, the first burden emphasized the destruction of Gentile world power in the last days before the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. The second burden stresses the deliverance and transformation of the nation Israel. In order to understand this 12th chapter, if you are here and you have not yet read much in the prophecy of Zechariah, it is necessary for us to bear these points in mind. Our passage presupposes several things. It presupposes that in the last days, the nation Israel shall be re-gathered to the land of Palestine. As we look today, and look toward the east, we notice at least that the situation is such that this prophecy could be fulfilled. We cannot, with dogmatism, say that the re-gathering of Israel in the land today is that referred to in the Bible. No one can say that, no one is that wise. We do not have the mind of God. We can only say that the situation is such that the prophecy can well be fulfilled within our understanding.

The second thing that is involved is, that some day an antichrist, an idol shepherd whom we referred to last week in the 11th chapter, an idol shepherd shall make a covenant with the Nation Israel. And the worship of the land shall be restored in a restored temple. But at the middle of the time of the dealings of this idol shepherd with the nation Israel, the covenant shall be broken and Israel shall not be a nation with a covenant made with the Antichrist, but shall be the object of the depredations of this man of sin, or idol shepherd. And so, this passage presupposes a warfare directed against the nation Israel, in the last days. And the final thing that it presupposes is the natural result of that. And that is, that a raid against the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of that land, shall be a federation of all the nations, gathered together against that place. There must be something of real worth in Jerusalem, and in that land, if all of the nation of the earth shall some day be involved in an attack against it. But that is what Zechariah chapter 12 presupposes.

So, today let's look at our passage, and I want to spend just a few moments on the earlier part, devoting most of our time to the consideration of the great change that takes place when Israel looks upon our Lord Jesus Christ in his second coming. In the first three verses of the 12th chapter, the prophet Zechariah describes the conflict that shall take place over Jerusalem in the last days, just prior to the second advent of Jesus Christ. Now he will speak of it here in a very general way. In the 14th chapter he will speak of it more specifically. And so beginning with the 1st verse, the prophet writes, “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which (that is the Lord who) stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”

Now, it is obvious that the chapter begins with an attestation to the effect that the God who is speaking in this 12th chapter is one who can fulfill the promises that he has made to men. Now it is very necessary for us to notice something like that in the twentieth century, because it is very difficult for anyone today to really believe that the time is coming when Israel shall be restored to the land, and that God is going to really fulfill these promises that are found in his word. If you speak with people about these things, they think immediately, “Well you must be some fundamentalist fanatic, to believe all of these things that the Bible says about the future.” And I'm sure that God understood that this is exactly the way that men should feel at this time. He tells us in the New Testament that when men speak of the second coming of Christ there shall be scoffers arising who shall say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the time of creation.” And so the 12th chapter of the book of Zechariah begins with an assertion of the supreme power of the deity who shall bring to pass these things. As if to stress the fact that what he is saying in this chapter, he is fully able to carry out. That's why he begins with, “the word from the Lord who stretches forth the heavens who lays the foundation of the earth and who has formed the spirit of man within him.” If he has made the heavens and the earth,

and if he has also created man and formed the spirit of man within him, than he is well able to arrange that in the last days, a federation of nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem, in antipathy to all that it represents, and he is well able to have his son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, come and win that final battle.

Now in the New Testament we notice, over and over again, that this is the thing that God does when he speaks of some of the blessings which seem strange to us, hard to believe. For example, in the 3rd chapter of the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul prays one of the most unusual and significant prayers that I think, was ever made. He prays that we would be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. He prays that Christ may dwell deep down in the hearts of believers, by faith. He prays that we may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. And then as if, that's not enough to pray, he prays that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. And I must confess when I read a passage like that I say, “Well, that may be true of someone else, but it's very difficult for me to believe that I could ever know the greatness of the love of Christ. And I surely could not be filled unto the fullness of God. That is a promise that is far beyond me.” And it's almost as if the apostle anticipates the objections that we have when he gives us these tremendous promises in the Bible.

So he says, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Unto him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” In other words, the promises of God, which are found in the word of God, are guaranteed by this supreme, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God. This is, by the way, why it is important for us to study the attributes of God. For in the attributes of God, I have a friend in Houston who calls it, “The essence box”, but nevertheless it's the attributes of God. And these things tell us what God is. And because he is what he is, he is able to do the things that arise out of naturally, that which he is. So since he is omnipotent, he is able to bring all things to pass. And I find it very easy, in

the light of these statements made about him, to believe then that these things shall come to pass. And when my friends, when I mention them, when they lift their eyebrows, they don't tell me I'm a fanatic until I've turned around and walked away, and they act exactly like I do, see I'm talking behind their back too, now. [Laughter] But when my friends lift their eyebrows I know exactly what they mean. To think that this could come to pass is ridiculous. It's just out of this world. This fellow's gone around the bend. And that's why the prophet states, this is said by, “the Lord which stretcheth forth the heavens, layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”

Now he speaks about the effect that Israel shall have upon the nations of the future. He says, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.” I would gather from this, that there is something about Jerusalem and Judah that is going to attract the nations of the future to that city. Have you been reading in the newspapers and in your other literature, the things that are being discovered in the land of Palestine today? Do you know that in the Dead Sea itself, which now at least so far as the western shore is concerned, belongs largely to Israel, do you know that in the Dead Sea there are forty-five billion tons, now that's right, forty-five billion tons of some of the most valuable chemicals that we know of? Did you know that? Did you know that in the Dead Sea itself, there is wealth that is worth not millions, billions. It is very easy to see, as things are being discovered within that land, that this land shall become, as Ezekiel says, a booty for the nations. And so they shall one day be gathered against Judah and against Jerusalem, to take that land. Now that is not the only reason they're gathered there. I say this only that you might be able to believe, you see, some of the things that are found in God's word.

But when the nations are gathered there, Zechariah says that he's going to make them a goblet of staggering. That is, they're going to take up Jerusalem, to drink it, just as you might take up a Bloody Mary to drink it. And you'd discover that that Bloody Mary,

which looks on the outside to be a very innocent drink, is something that will, well, it will do things to your eye balls, so I understand. Now mind you, I'm not recommending this, and I'm not recommending that you accept this product for yourself. But I know, at least my friends tell me. To tell you the truth, I called someone yesterday and I said, “Now tell me, some drink that is extremely powerful.” And he said, “It's a Bloody Mary,” [Laughter] said, “That's what you want. It's tomato juice and it looks very, very innocent. But of course it's mixed with Vodka, and when you drink it, it really does things to you.”

And so, Israel shall be very much like that in that day. And the nations shall come down and they will say, “I'm going to drink this grape juice.” But they are going to discover that it's a Bloody Mary, as far they're concerned. It's a goblet of staggering. And that, by the way, is exactly what God says. You think I'm trying to make something out of the word, no I'm not. That's exactly what he says, “It's a goblet of reeling” they're going to take it up and think they're going to drink it and enjoy it, but it's going to cause them to stagger around like alcoholics.

“And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people:” and so as they come, by the way, that's a stone in Hebrew that was often used of weight lifting stones. Now all young men lift weights today. You know how they do, they strain and you hear all this noise, don't you wives? You hear all of this noise back in the boy's room, and every now and then you hear one of them hit the floor, and you wonder if it has gone through the floor and so you rush back, weight lifting. And then occasionally of course, it's possible to dislocate a bone, or it's possible to cause a rupture. And that is exactly the figure that is used in the 3rd verse. “In that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people:” they're going to go down there and say, “I think I'll practice my weights a little and I'm going to lift up Judah and Jerusalem.” But they're going to discover that things will happen to them, when they lay their hand upon God's place and God's people.

Now we must hasten on, because we want to emphasize the latter part of this chapter. But in verses 4 through 9, he stresses the fact that Israel shall be delivered when these nations are gathered against them. When this, when the nations gather against Jerusalem, God by a mighty divine deliverance, turns the enemy to maddened riders upon maddened steeds. And God's eye is upon his people, and because his eye is upon his people, he is sure to deliver them. I again say, I take this to be literal, and to be literally fulfilled.

Some time ago I mentioned an old story, which I have used a number of times in Bible teaching, because I think it sets forth some principles that are exceedingly important. Many years ago, a Jew was speaking with a Christian minister. Now this Christian minister did not believe in the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. He believed that they were fulfilled in the church. He of course, took the blessings. He did not take the curses. But he took the blessings, and said the blessings are fulfilled in the church. And he ignored the promises, the prophecies of cursing in the Old Testament. He was speaking to the Jew about the claims of Jesus Christ. And the Jew spoke to him and he said, “I want to ask you a question sir. Do you believe Luke chapter 1 and verse 31, ‘And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.’”? The Christian minister said, “Yes I do, I believe in the virgin birth.” The Jew then said, “Well do you believe verses 32 and 33, ‘and he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ Do you believe that sir?”

The Christian minister said, “No, I do not.” “How do you understand it?” “Well, I understand it to be a reference to the fact that Jesus Christ is going to have a spiritual kingdom in the church.” The Jew said, “This is an amazing thing to me.” He says, “You're willing to believe verse 31 literally, which records the virgin birth, which to my mind is a far greater miracle than the second. And yet you will not believe the second.

How is that? Why do you believe, sir, in the 31st verse, about the virgin birth, and you do not believe the other?” The Christian minister said, “I believe in verse 31, that Jesus was born of a virgin because it is a fact.” And the Jew, with an air of scorn and inexpressible triumph said, “Ah, I see it. You believe in Scripture, because it is a fact. I believe in Scripture because it is the word of God.” Now it’s obvious that the Jew stood on higher ground. He believed in the word of God. And because it was the word of God, he accepted its teaching. He did not test the word of God by what he thought were facts, but he believed that God was able to bring to pass the statements of Scripture. And so I believe these things.

Robert Louis Stevenson, whom we know as a man of literature, was nevertheless a believer. And in his latter days, he became firmly convinced that the Scriptures would be fulfilled as God had written them. And when he spent his last days on the island of Samoas, he came into contact with a missionary, who later wrote an article in the Atlantic Monthly. And in this article he went on to say that Robert Louis Stevenson, in his last days, spoke often about the fact that the Christian church had neglected the great promises of the Old Testament. Mr. Stevenson went on to say the Old Testament and the New Testament, contains glorious promises of the future, which if they are taken in their plain sense, afford a great means of encouragement and consolation to the people of God. But when they are applied to the church, they become farcical. When they are not taken in their simple sense, but applied to those to whom they do not apply, they are a comedy. And so the Old Testament is a comedy, and it is farcical, if it is not to be fulfilled as God wrote it. This is why the Old Testament is neglected today. But of course, the Old Testament was the Bible of the early church. They did not have a New Testament, they carried the Old Testament around in their pockets and they proved, and they preached from the Scriptures as they knew them in the Old Testament. And they justified the Christian religion from the standpoint of the teaching of the Old Testament. And they looked forward to the future, in the light of the promises which would be

made by the prophets. To which also were added, those of the apostles as our Lord Jesus taught them.

And so now in the first part of the 12th chapter, we have had this wonderful picture of the conflict against Jerusalem, and the conquest of the nations by God, but what about the nation itself? So we turn now to the 10th verse. And we read of the conversion of the nation Israel. Beneath the robes of religion, Israel has had a barren unfeeling heart of stone. Why should he, God, wish to destroy her enemies? That's a natural question that comes to us, why should God wish to destroy the enemies of Israel? Israel has not responded to him, Israel has been unfeeling. Israel has been indifferent. And furthermore, Israel has been in positive antipathy against God.

How can we explain that he is concerned with her? Well, the only way in which we can explain it is to stress the fact that divine initiative is involved. And you will notice in the 12th chapter, in the 10th verse, the prophet says, “And I (God, Jehovah) I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” In other words, it is the divine initiative that is responsible for the conversion of Israel. He has chosen Israel and he is to bring them to faith in him because he loves them, and he loves them because he loves them, that's what the Bible says. And that of course, is his attitude toward me. He has chosen me to put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ because he loved me, and he, in the great tremendous divine initiative, brought me to faith in Christ. And if I ask why he has done this, the only answer I can give is because he loves me, and he loves me because he loves me, and he loves me because he loves me, and so on. That's exactly what the Scriptures say. And it's a wonderful truth. And all we have to do to experience this for ourselves is to respond to this great love of God. And so far as the Bible is concerned, all, everywhere, may believe in him, and receive the benefits of this great love of God.

And so, the time is coming when, to the accompaniment of the hallelujahs of Abraham, of Moses, of the prophets, of the apostles, and perhaps the tears of our Lord Jesus, Israel shall have a tremendous transformation of heart and this great nation, which has been in such opposition to God, which has been an enemy of God down through the centuries, shall in this tremendous, touching scene, Israel shall find her Lord. And I want to tell you, I do not know of any scene in Scripture which I want to witness more than this one. I cannot wait to see the day when this great nation of people, so opposed to God which, as a nation, figuratively has lifted its fist against Jehovah in heaven, and against the one who sits at the right hand. When I want to see the day when they themselves turn and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only illustration that I can think of in the word of God which can effectively picture what is going to happen is the illustration of Joseph's revelation of himself to his brethren. You know the old story, and you remember that the brethren, because they hated Joseph, sold him into captivity. All of this is designed to illustrate the ministry of the Lord Jesus, for it is his brethren who have sold him. And Joseph was sold into captivity. He finally made his way to Egypt. There he came to be the top man in the kingdom, next to Pharaoh. He sat at Pharaoh's right hand, as our Lord Jesus today sits at the right hand of God in heaven. And you know we have not time to go through all of those wonderful details, told in the latter chapters of the book of Genesis, how Joseph finally made himself known to his brethren, how it so happened that some of them fell into his hands, and how he wanted so badly to see his father, and his little brother Benjamin, and how he arranged ultimately for them to come down to the land. They didn't know what was happening, they were very much disturbed that this strange man, whom they did not recognize, who was their own brother, this strange man, was bringing to pass all of these circumstances which seemed to be so destructive to them.

And Jacob of course, was one who was immensely impressed by all of this. He spoke about the fact that he had lost Joseph and now he was going to lose Benjamin, and

it looked as if everything was against him. All these things are against me, Jacob said. And finally, when Joseph brought the brethren and got them into his presence in the 45th chapter of the book of Genesis, he couldn't stand it any longer and he made everybody move out, and there in the presence of the brethren, he wept aloud, the text of Scripture says. Now all of this of course, is illustrative of our Lord Jesus Christ and his attitude toward Jacob today. He wept aloud, in fact the weeping and wailing of Joseph was so loud that those outside the room heard it. And I cannot help but believe in my own heart, that one of the reasons that Israel responds to our Lord Jesus Christ, and weeps and wails as they do, is because our Lord Jesus Christ weeps first. And I cannot help but believe that when the time comes, the one who shall be most visibly affected by the revelation of himself to Israel shall be our Lord Jesus himself.

You know I've often heard people get up behind the pulpit and tell how they were converted. And sometimes when I know the background of it, I sit over in the corner and tears begin to come in my eyes, and I don't like for people to see that I'm really kind of tender hearted, you know. And I look down and I rub my eyes like this, because there's just something about a man coming to faith in Christ that touches me. There's just something about it, it's something I cannot explain. It's just something that touches me in my inmost being. To see a man who has been opposed to God, a rebel, an alien, who doesn't know anything about God and now he sees our lovely Lord Jesus Christ and he bows before him and says, "Thank you Lord for giving Jesus Christ to die for me." And I want you to know the tears really begin to flow, and I love to have an audience in which there are a few. You know there are several in this congregation too, and every now and then I look around to see if I'm getting home to you, and I can tell, there are a few little tears coming down your face and so I say, "Well, the Holy Spirit is working." I used to have an airline pilot, he was a Braniff] pilot, and you know whenever I began to talk about the cross, I could look at his face, and pretty soon the tears would begin to flow. And this man, the rest of the pilots didn't know this but, you know this

man had a reputation among the pilots of being a very tough and rigid kind of a person. But when the gospel was preached, the tears really flowed. And I think that when this day comes, when this nation responds to our Lord Jesus Christ, there is going to be tremendous weeping and wailing and I think that of all the people who shall weep, our Lord shall weep the most.

And the text says, “And I will pour upon the house of David.” There is no gracious thought that ever originates in the free will of unregenerate men. There is no act that is ever glorifying to God that originates in the free will of unregenerate men. There is no deed that is pleasing to God that ever originates in the unregenerate will of man. Everything that is pleasing to God originates first of all, in the activity of God. And so I read, “And I will pour”. Prophets may warn, men may plead, but it is God who ultimately prevails upon the hearts of men. And so we read, “And I will pour and they shall look.” “I will pour and they shall look,” for it is God who takes the initiative in all of the work of God in the hearts of men.

And the text says, “and they shall look unto me”. Is this the look of faith, or is it the look of sight? When the Lord Jesus comes, is it the look of sight, which sees him as the one who has been crucified, is that what Zechariah means? Or does he mean that they shall look simply in faith, and realize that it is the Savior who has died for them, whom they do not see, visibly. Now we know of course, they shall see him. I am inclined to think that it is both. They see our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and of course, he soon comes and they see him visibly, as the one who has come and has died for them. “They shall look unto me, whom they have pierced.” Now this settles the question it seems, to me, of national guilt, “They shall look unto me whom they have pierced.” Many have been the attempts of Israel to explain away Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, “They shall look unto me whom they have pierced.” There is no question but that Israel has had a hand in piercing our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have a commentary on the Old Testament written by some Jewish scholars, it's not a bad commentary in many ways, and I find a great deal of help. I notice the explanation that they gave of the 10th verse of the 12th chapter. It was something like this: They shall look unto me, because they, the nations, have thrust him through. They shall look unto me because they the nations have pierced him through. And I looked in my Hebrew text to seek, to discover how it was possible for this rendering to be given to the text. It is impossible. Will you look at the text carefully, it says, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem”. There is the “they” of the text, not the nations. The nations have been mentioned back in the 9th verse. But since that mention, there has been the mention of the Jews of verse 10. And so the normal, surely the normal interpretation of the 10th verse is, “And they”, that is the inhabitants of Jerusalem, about whom I've just been speaking. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced”, the “they” must refer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And if we could turn to the Hebrew text, and I could make myself intelligible to you, I think in the Hebrew text, there is a special stress upon the fact that this “whom” is a reference to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. It is the view point of the Jews that messiah Ben Joseph, an imaginary character who does not have any existence in Scripture, messiah Ben Joseph is slain in the battle of Armageddon, or the battle between Gog and Magog, and that it is this messiah who is referred to here. “They shall look upon me, whom they the nations have pierced” that's messiah Ben Joseph, that is pure imagination. That is an attempt to get away from the plain teaching of the word of God. And when we turn to the New Testament we find that, three times, Zechariah 12, verse 10 is referred to our Lord Jesus Christ. So the text says, “And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications. And they the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall look upon me,” who is that “me”. Why, that is the Jehovah who has been speaking throughout this passage, our Lord Jesus Christ. “They shall look upon me whom they the inhabitants of Jerusalem have pierced, and they shall mourn for

him,” and this is the soft mellow fruit of the spirit of God, which fixes its eye upon the wrong done to God.

Oh how we need a revival of repentance, genuine repentance in the church of God. Do you know what repentance is in the sight of God? It is an acknowledgment of the fact that we have been wrong before him. It is a change of mind with respect to everything that we thought before we come to know Jesus Christ as Savior. There is a godly repentance that works towards salvation. It is the repentance that is not concerned with the effects of sin upon ourselves. Esau repented, the text of Scripture said, but his repentance was the ungodly kind of repentance. He repented because he had eaten the pottage and now he had lost the birth right. He did not repent because he had sinned against God. Judas repented, or regretted, as the text of Scripture said, he regretted what was happening to him but he never went to our Lord Jesus and acknowledged that he had sinned against him. The repentance that does not repent, in the sight of God is a repentance that needs to be repented of.

The text of Scripture, when we have genuine repentance, says that it is an acknowledgment of the fact that we have sinned against God. It is the kind of repentance that David had when he said, “Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.” It is the repentance that the prodigal son experienced, when he went back to the father and he spoke about the fact that he had sinned before God, and he had sinned against his father. It’s the repentance that realizes that our sin, first of all, is sin against heaven. And I want to tell you that when the day comes in Believers Chapel, when we recognize that sin is against God, when we really recognize that, then there shall be an increase of holiness in the congregation, and a tremendous increase in outreach in the lives of each one of us. For when that day comes, the fire and the power of God shall be upon this congregation. But what a wonderful day it’s going to be when Israel “shall look upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son,” a nation of Jeremiahs, all of them weeping prophets who

sing, “Alas and did my Savior bleed and did my sovereign die, would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I.” What a tremendous and wonderful experience and wonderful time this is going to be.

The text says that they shall mourn as for an only son. I don't know how to expound that, I must confess, sometimes words leave me. But, about two years ago, a little less than that, I had an experience. It was something that came to me just by accident, an accident of an acquaintance. But we were very well acquainted with a family, they are dear friends of ours. They had one son, and that son was killed. And I was called in the morning, about three o'clock, both Mary and me. It was the policeman. He had arrived at the home to give the news. And he had asked her whom to call. She gave him two names, my wife's name and another friend. We rushed over, and I heard what happened. She was upstairs. She heard the doorbell ringing. She looked out from the second story and she saw the police car. And it just so happened, that she had read in the newspaper, just a few months before that, of some other young football players who had been killed. And she knew them very well, and she knew that it was the policemen who came to give the news. And when she looked out and saw the police car at three o'clock in the morning, she said afterwards, her heart dropped. And said she went down tremblingly, and she opened the door. The policeman said, “Is this the so-and-so residence?” She said, “Yes”. They said, “May we step in?” She said, “Yes”. They spoke to her and said, “We have terrible news to give you. Your son has been killed.” She said afterwards she just collapsed on the floor. I think she said, “Oh my God.” Wonderful Christian woman, collapsed on the floor. We arrived, of course, when she had come to, again. It's a terrible experience.

When I look at the text of Scripture and read “And they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son,” I realize the tremendous transformation that is to take place in Israel. And all of the Abrahams, and all of the Isaacs, and all of the others, and as a nation as a whole, they shall collapse before our Lord Jesus Christ, crying out, “Oh

my God, we have crucified our king and our Lord.” And Zechariah describes the tremendous mourning that takes place. Now you know in the book of the prophet Isaiah, we have the exact words that they shall utter, for we have Israel’s penitential confession, in the 53rd chapter of the book of Isaiah. And this is what they shall say at that day,

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he has grown up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of dry ground: he had no form nor comeliness; and when we saw him, there was no beauty in him that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we have been healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Oh my God, why have we done it? This is Israel’s sentiment, in that day. Don’t you look forward to that day? I think I’m going to contribute a few tears to that too. They’re going to be tears of bitter happiness, for Israel. They’re going to be tears of happiness, so far as I’m concerned. Now Zechariah describes, in the remainder of the chapter, this mourning that is not only national, but individual and personal. You know when I read this chapter, and this is the last thing I’m going to say to you this morning, when I read this chapter, the prayer that I offer by my bed side, which I offered last night and this morning, is “Oh that I might have some of the tenderness of heart that Israel shall have in that day,” for it seems to me that this is only the magnificent expression of what should be individually true of us when we come to know him, when we realize that it is we, who have crucified our Lord Jesus. It is we who have responded in this way in our

own individual lives, until the day when he poured upon us the spirit of grace and supplications.

How may I have a heart like this? Well I know first, that it arises from the divine operation. Only God can make this stony heart of mine like wax. Only he can melt the iceberg of my soul. And it is God's work. And I know too, as I look at this, that apparently it's wrought by a faith look at the pierced son of God. For it's when Israel sees him as the one who has been slain for them, that this great transformation takes place in their hearts. It was an old preacher who said that we ought to look at the cross until all that is on the cross is in our hearts. And this is the thing, it seems to me, whereby God brings us to the place that we respond as Israel responds, and come to know him in the way that Israel shall come to know him. It is only as I see him, and the spirit of God pours upon me, this spirit of grace and supplications. And the evidence will be found in the fact that I shall mourn for my sin before God too, in the intense way that they do.

Someone has said the eyes have been given for two purposes. Eyes are given to see with, and eyes are given to weep with. Have you looked off to the cross? Have you looked at our Lord Jesus as the one who died for you? Have you seen him as Israel shall see him in that day, as the Lord Jehovah, who so loved them that as with Joseph, he wept that they might come to him? Have you thought of him at the right hand of God, as desirous from his inmost being that you respond to him? And have you come to him? You who are children in this audience, have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? You young people, have you put your trust in Christ? And you adults, is it really personal with you? Do you know him personally? Have you said, “Thank you Lord for giving Jesus Christ to die for me, I take him as my personal Savior”? I wish you'd forget about me. I wish you'd think about the cross. And I wish you'd put your trust in him. And then I hope the spirit of God, as you look at the crucified Savior, shall so move your heart, that you shall be affected by what he has done for you. Shall we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this wonderful event that we have been considering, when Israel shall look upon him whom they have pierced. And oh Father, we too are guilty. Wilt Thou melt our cold hearts, and touch us as Thou shalt touch them. And enable us oh God, with the sense of relationship to him. And out of the love and gratitude, which the spirit gives, may we serve him acceptably. May Thy blessing go with us as we part. In Jesus' name. Amen.