



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 2:14-21

“This is That”

TRANSCRIPT

.... morning we have come to that part of Acts chapter 2 where Peter gives us the first sermon of the special Christian era, which began on the Day of Pentecost with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and I think it would be profitable for us to turn, first of all, to the Old Testament Book of Joel. We'll declare a slight intermission while you find it, and read chapter 2 in verse 28 through verse 32, and then we'll turn to the New Testament, and read Acts chapter 2, verse 14 through verse 21.

So I'm going to read now first from Acts -- from Joel chapter 2, verse 28 through verse 32. Joel is a very short prophecy, and the prophet has primarily in mind, setting forth some of the local judgments that are going to fall upon the nation if they do not repent and turn to him, and the special form of the judgment is the form of a locust plague. And then as Joel unfolds the teaching that God gave him, he calls upon Israel to repent, and then evidently, the nation did repent, for in the eighteenth verse of the second chapter we read these words,

“Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.”

Now strikingly, in the original text, this is in the past tense. Now, many of the versions do not render it this way, and in the New International Version I believe, and the New American Standard Version, this is rendered somewhat similarly to the Authorized Version, “Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.” But in the Hebrew text, it’s very plainly past in time, and if you have a New American Standard Bible, you will notice that in the margin, the past time is given as a possible rendering, and in the New English Bible this is rendered in past time, and I think properly. So that what Joel tells us, is that the nation did -- after Joel’s ministry to them -- repent, and then after that Joel gives some remarkable prophecies that are going to be blessings for the nation, and this is probably the highlight of them; chapter 2, verse 28 and verse 32. And you will see that this is the source of Peter’s opening remarks in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those day -- days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

You notice, in this statement we have a promise of deliverance in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. One of the local fulfillments of this, of course, is what happened on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand people did respond to the Gospel preached by Peter and were baptized in testimony to their faith. Notice also, that in the thirty-second

verse we read, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be liv -- delivered.” And then at the conclusion of the verse we read, “and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” So we have here the two sides of the work of grace and the salvation of individuals from the human standpoint. “We call upon the name of the Lord.” But it is the remnant whom the Lord calls, who do call upon the name of the Lord. So we have the sovereignty of God in his effectual call, and we also have the human responsibility, “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Let’s turn now to Acts chapter 2, and remember on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles and others were gathered in the Temple area, “There suddenly came to them cloven tongues like as a fire. It sat upon each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

And then in the midst of this remarkable occurrence of the coming of the Holy Spirit, there were some who were “amazed and marveled at what had happened.” That’s not surprising. There were some who were also “perplexed over the matter wondering just what does this mean.” And then, as you might expect, there were some who were mocking, because they were saying, “These men are full of new wine.” And so it was propitious that Peter should stand and give an explanation of what was transpiring.

It’s startling, isn’t it, that Peter is able to do this, because the picture that we get of Peter in the Synoptic Gospels, and in the Gospel of John, is of a blundering apostle who does not seem to understand what is really happening in the ministry of our Lord very well, but now on the Day of Pentecost, he is able to stand with authority and give an authoritative explanation of what has happening -- what has happened. Incidentally, in between the picture of Peter found in our gospels and the picture of Peter here, is the forty days of instruction concerning the kingdom of God that Jesus gave the apostles after his resurrection. Verse 14,

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them; Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that, that was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord shall come.”

That is the day, of course, that is associated with the second advent of the Lord Jesus to the earth, closing a period of time of judgment upon the earth. And then the invitation as Peter cites it here is,

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word, and let's bow together now in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] We're grateful to Thee, Lord, for the privilege that is ours today; to gather together, to read the Word of God, to ponder its teaching. We thank Thee for these magnificent promises that are ours. We especially give Thee thanks for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who came on the Day of Pentecost, and who now for nineteen hundred years, has been ministering at the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of

the throne of God, and bringing men into the body of Christ through regeneration and faith.

We thank Thee that he has, through the centuries, worked in the lives of so many individuals, bringing them to a knowledge of their sin, of their need, causing them to call upon the name of the Lord, and then giving them salvation through the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. We are grateful, Lord, we have this marvelous privilege of studying the Scriptures together with others who know and love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for him; for all that he is to us today.

We would remember those who are mentioned specifically in our Calendar of Concern. Bless them. We pray Lord that Thou would give guidance and direction to those who need guidance. For those who are sick, we ask, Lord, that Thou would give healing in accordance with Thy will. For those who are perplexed and troubled regarding the problems of life, we ask that Thou wilt minister to them, and, Lord, give release to them.

For the whole church, the body of Christ, we pray. Wherever members who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ are today, give them strength and comfort and conciliation from our great triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We pray for our country, for our president, for those associated with him in the government of this great land, we commit him and them to Thee too. And, Lord, in this meeting, as we sing the hymns, as we read the Scriptures, and as we hear the preaching of the Word, may Thy presence be with us -- each one of us -- from the young people who are here, to the older people as well.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Some years ago when I first gave a series of messages on the Book of Acts, and then in the second giving of this series about twelve or fourteen years ago, I devoted just one message to Peter's great sermon upon the Day of Pentecost, but this

time, feeling that this is such an important subject, that it deserves more than just one sermon, I want to give several on the message that Peter gave on the Day of Pentecost, and today is the first of them. One notices, as one reads this sermon that Peter gave on the Day of Pentecost, that, first of all, it's a very plain sermon. Oh, it is true that it does require some understanding of Scripture, in order to understand it, but it was plain for those who were gathered in the Temple area that morning. It was certainly pertinent, because it was directed to the precise thing that had happened when the Holy Spirit came with the cloven tongues of fire, and men began to speak in tongues which they had never studied. That naturally would have provoked question and amazement, and Peter's message is directed directly to that. It's a very personal message, because at the conclusion of it, he applies the teaching to those who were there. As a matter of fact, Peter doesn't apply it so much as the Holy Spirit does, for the Holy Spirit brought such conviction upon the ones who were gathered there, that they were the ones who gave the invitation to respond, rather than the apostle himself. He replied to them, as we shall see.

It's a very positive message too in the sense, that Peter is explaining what happens. He devotes very little to the negative explanation of it. Most of it is directed to a positive -- may I say the word -- theological explanation of what happened on the Day of Pentecost.

Now, I'm not surprised that the apostle gave a doctrinal explanation of what happened. It's when doctrine germinates and bears fruit that things happen in the lives of people. We have just recently seen an instance of an individual who has been converted after listening to the Word off and on for a number of years, and already his wife and others are beginning to see a transforming change in the life, because doctrine, when it germinates, does bring a change of life and things happen. So it's a very positive message directed toward biblical teaching.

An old -- an old mountaineer put it this way; he put it in a more earthy fashion, but with equal validity. He said, “A man can't no more talk about what he don't know,

than he can come back from where he ain't been.” [laughter] So when we talk in the exposition of the Word of God about biblical doctrine, we are talking about what we know, because it has been revealed to us in the Word of God. And in our preaching of the Word of God, there is that note of stress upon biblical teaching. This is such a magnificent example for us, of the way that preaching should be, in the age in which we are living.

Notice how positive it is too. Peter doesn't say over and over again, “So far as I can see,” or “It seems to me,” or “I think,” or “I feel.” There isn't really anything wrong, so far as I know, with saying occasionally, “I think,” or even “I feel,” but if that is characteristic of our message, it's out of harmony with the New Testament, which is very strongly directed toward positive, even dogmatic assurance of certainty of the truths that are being spoken about. We do not ever have the apostle saying, “The weight of contemporary scholarship is on this interpretation of the Old Testament.” But the apostles and others who wrote the New Testament, guided by the Holy Spirit, speak positively and definitely, and it's certainly persuasive. Peter was guided by the Holy Spirit, and his message is a persuasive message. He stands up -- “primus inter pares,” or “first among equals” -- as the mouthpiece of the eleven. It was not because Peter was greater than the others, but he was the chosen spokesman for them, and guided by the Holy Spirit, he stands upon his feet and gives the message.

Now, I'm not surprised when I read this that the people were on the hill that day where the Temple was, in a state of amazement and perplexity. They had never seen anything like this. They had gathered on this feast day, the Day of Pentecost. They were, no doubt, going about the ordinary affairs of the day. They were discussing with one another, conversing, carrying on personal relationships, and suddenly in the midst of the area there comes this remarkable miracle of the tongues from heaven, “like as of fire,” and then separating, and falling upon each of the individuals who belonged to the Church of

Jesus Christ there. And furthermore, individuals whom they knew quite well began to speak in other languages which they had never studied.

Now, that was an amazing thing. If, for example, one of my friends whom I know very well should, in the midst of a gathering of people, suddenly begin to speak a foreign tongue -- let us say, Arabic -- and a Saudi man in our congregation should say, "He's talking in my language," we would be amazed, and we would be convinced that this was a miraculous thing.

Now, this was what was happening. Men were given the power to speak in a language which they had never studied. It is not that they were speaking in ecstatic speech, and that God gave a gift of hearing what was heard in their language, these men spoke in different tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance. It was a miracle of speaking, not a miracle of hearing. That is evident from a careful reading of this text.

So they were startled and amazed. Imagine Peter and James and John and Matthew and others speaking in languages which they have never heard, and these people gathered from all over the face of the earth -- Medes, and Parathions, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Cappadocia, and Pontus -- coming and saying, "Look, I hear Peter speaking in my language," or "I hear John speaking in my language. Have they studied these languages?" And then John and others would say -- who knew them -- "We have never studied these languages. This is the gift of God."

It was designed to impress upon those who were there that God was with this new movement, and specifically, he was with the apostles who were going to be the special emissaries of the Lord Jesus in the age after he has left them in his physical presence. So the crowd was gathered into three different groups. Some were amazed at what was happening. Others were perplexed and were asking one another, "What in the world is this?" And then, as is usually the case, there were some standing on the side who were seeking, out of unbelief, to explain what was happening, and they were saying,

“Ah, these fellows are just -- have just had a little bit too much to drink this morning.” So they accused them of drinking at nine o'clock in the morning.

Now, Peter first of all in his explanation, stands up and our text that I'm reading from -- the Authorized Version -- says that, “He stood up with the eleven. He lifted up his voice, and he said unto them.” That term translated “said” in the Authorized Version -- translated in some of the other versions by “declared,” was a term that was often used in ancient usage, of individuals who spoke as diviners, who spoke as prophets, who spoke as givers of oracles, or in other words, those who were spirit-inspired persons; persons inspired by some spirit beyond their own spirit. Well in this case, it was clearly Peter speaking by the inspiration, or by the -- shall I say -- the instigation of the Holy Spirit. What has given -- what has been given us in the Book of Acts, is his inspired sermon.

So, first of all, Peter will explain, and he will explain negatively and then positively, but he will spend most of his time on the positive explanation. He denies that these men are drinking. He says in the fifteenth verse,

“For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.”

The time is against that. It's only nine o'clock in the morning. Jewish people, incidentally, did not eat much breakfast, and surely he said, “It's irrational to think that these people who did not eat much breakfast at all, should now be drunk from wine.” So evidently, there were just a few who were making these absurd accusations against them, and Peter doesn't devote a whole lot of time to it. He simply says, “They are not drunk as you think. It's too early for drinking of any wine.”

Now, that gives us an interesting clue, of course, to the nature of what it means to be “filled with the Spirit.” They evidently were exhilarated. They were caught up in what had happened to them. They were happy. They were talking. And in fact, the very

expression “happy,” shows the harmony between a person who is filled with the Spirit, and a person who is filled with the spirits. Now, when I was growing up and going through college, when we spoke of a person who was not drunk, but who had had a few drinks, we would say concerning him, “He’s really getting happy.” Now, the language, his tongue would be loosened. He would be sometimes an entirely different kind of person; often voluble, talkative, and evidently these men under the influence of the Holy Spirit had some characteristics similar to those who were under the influence of whiskey.

That’s why that’s why Paul says in Ephesians 5, “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.” There’s a similarity between the two. Both exercise control over us. The person who drinks become -- comes under the control of the spirit, so Peter and those who were with him had come under the control of the Spirit, and that’s the Spirit we ought to come under the control of, not under the control of the spirits. Well, Peter says that, and now he passes on to the positive side, and he says, “Actually, what is happening here, is what Joel had said was going to happen many hundreds of years ago.” He says, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

Now, one who was a study of the Bible, might have had a clue that this was going to happen, because you see, Israel celebrated seven feasts every year. The first month of the year was around our April time, and they celebrated the Feast of the Passover. The lamb was slain. That was illustrative of what Christ would do centuries later when he came as the Lamb of God and died for our sins. Following that, was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and for one week, the Israelites lived with no leaven in their houses. Then on third day after the Passover -- on the Sunday morning in our Lord’s case -- was the Feast of First Fruits. That was illustrative of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, for he is called the “first fruits from the dead,” and we too are said to participate in the resurrection as a kind of first fruits. Then after those three feasts, fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits, was the Feast of Pentecost, and the children of Israel brought two loaves of bread, and offered them to the Lord. The significant thing about these two loaves of

bread is that they were baked with leaven, which was symbolical of that which was evil. What is significant about it, is that in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which went on for a week, they were not to have any leaven in the house, but at this feast, they were to offer loaves of bread to God baked with leaven, suggestive -- only suggestive -- illustrative of the Day of Pentecost, when Jew and Gentile are united together in the body of Christ, nevertheless sinners, but united in the body of Christ, and become a kind of offering to the Lord.

Then for months there was no feast, until the seventh month of the year, when the final three feasts were observed; the Feast of Trumpets, which called Israel to convocation; the Feats of the Day of Atonement, in which Israel recognized their -- the atoning work of the Lord God, and the Feast of Tabernacles, in which they celebrated by dwelling in booths upon the face of the land. These feasts, of course, look into the future, and the separation from the other feasts of a number of months, suggests -- only suggests -- the fact, that there is a lengthy period of time between Pentecost and the return of Israel to the place of blessing before the Lord.

Now, if you had known of these feasts, and if you had known that the Feast of Pentecost was to follow fifty days after the resurrection, you might have suspected that something was going to happen on the Day of Pentecost. In addition, you would have had our Lord's words, for remember he had said to them, "You are witnesses of the fact that I was to suffer, that I was to rise from the dead the third day. And behold," Jesus said in Luke chapter 24, "I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." And then in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, we had the promise again, "Being assembled together" -- this is the fourth verse of Acts 1 -- "with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." So they knew from our Lord's words that something was going to happen

shortly, and if they had put the two together, they might have suggest -- might have known, that on the Day of Pentecost, would be the ideal time when they would be “endued with power from on high,” when the Lord Jesus -- receiving from the proud Father the promise of the Holy Spirit -- would give the Spirit to the church of Jesus Christ.

That, of course, is what is happening pre-eminently here. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church of Christ for this age, and out of all of the gift of the Spirit, flow his individual ministries; baptism, filling, regeneration, sealing, guiding, directing. All of these things flow out of this once-for-all gift of the Spirit to the church of Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost.

Joel was the prophet of the Lord, and he had foretold these things. He spoke about the Day of the Lord, not only as a time of local judgment, but pre-eminently of a future time, when at the Second Advent of the Lord, judgment would be exercised over the whole of the earth. He did that in order to bring Israel to repentance, suggesting to them, “If they do not repent, they are headed into judgment.” And of course, this is the purpose of what is occurring here. Peter will warn them of judgment, and he will urge them to repent in the next chapter, and turn to the Lord that they may escape judgment, and that they might enter into blessing. Joel, therefore, spoke a great deal about the doctrine of repentance, but pre-eminently he spoke in the terms of the promise of the outpoured Spirit.

Now, we come to verse 16 where Peter says, “But this is that.” A great deal of discussion has taken place over the meaning of this little expression -- three words -- “This is that.” What is “this is that”? Well, if you put, first of all, these two passages -- one from the Old Testament, and one from the New -- together, you’ll notice there are just very minor changes. Joel had said, “It will come to pass afterward.” Peter says in first seventeen, “It shall come to pass in the last days.” So Joel’s “afterward” is interpreted by Peter as “in the last days.” We are evidently, in the “last days” at the present time. The “last days” is a period of time that has now lasted for many centuries, but it is the period

of time between the first advent of our Lord and the second advent of our Lord. We may be in the latter part of the “last days.” We do not know, but we know from this, that we are in one sense, in the last days.

In other words, God’s final saving program has become -- has begun. The death has taken place. The resurrection has taken place. The gift of the Spirit has been given. Nothing remains, but the completion of the work of judgment, and the coming of our Lord in his second advent, to bring with him the kingdom of God.

So that’s the first thing that we notice; that there are some slight changes in the text, but they really just tell us that we are in the last days. God’s final saving work has begun. But what is meant by “this is that”? It seems so plain to me, that sometimes I’m startled that biblical interpreters have problems over this. Some, for example, believe -- generally amillennial, but not necessarily all of the amillennialists -- that Joel’s prophecy was completely fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, and so “this is that” is designed to let us know, that everything that was in Joel’s prophecy in chapter 2 did come to pass on the Day of Pentecost. But one, of course, in order to take this interpretation, must say that the language is used figuratively, because -- take a look at some of the statements that are made; for example, verse 19 and verse 20.

“And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.”

We do not have any indication from the text of the Book of Acts, that these things did take place at that time. Now, if we understand them figuratively, we have a slight problem, since Peter, later in his second letter in the third chapter, refers to much the same kind of thing, and there locates the fulfillment in the future, associated with the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, furthermore, in Revelation chapter 6 in verse

12, almost the precise wording is referred there to the second advent of our Lord. So I cannot really subscribe to this interpretation; that is, that everything on the Day of Pentecost -- that happened there -- fulfilled everything in Joel's prophecy.

Some other students -- some of -- some of them dispensational, but not all, just as not all amillennialists follow the preceding interpretation -- have suggested that there is no fulfillment at all of Joel's prophecy, and they point out this; they say, "Peter said; this is that." He doesn't say that it might be fulfilled. He doesn't even use other terms like "It stands written that," which would suggest that the prophecy of Joel is being interpreted as being fulfilled today by Peter. That does not impress me too much, for this reason: I do not think that Peter could have made a stronger statement, identifying what happened on the Day of Pentecost with Joel's prophecy, that by saying, "this is that." Now, when he says, "this is that," that's even stronger than, "that it might stand -- that it stands written," or "that it might be fulfilled." He says, "this is that," so I must believe that there is some sense in which, what Joel is speaking about, has taken place on the Day of Pentecost. "This is that."

So with many other interpreters, I'm inclined to believe -- I'm not speaking as an apostle, you see, so I say I'm inclined to believe. I believe that what we have is a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Any stronger words for fulfillment could not be devised than "this is that," and yet there are certain things in this prophecy that apparently have not yet been fulfilled. But there is nothing wrong in seeing the future as a series of occurrences, and some of them being fulfilled at a particular time in history and others of them being fulfilled later. This prophecy in Joel, I think, sees the future as a series of occurrences separated by intervals. It's almost like Beacher's Generic Prophecy, in which he spoke of the fact, that prophecies could be thought of as generic prophecies; part of them being fulfilled in one age, another part in another age, and so on until the final climactic fulfillment awaits the future.

Let me give you an illustration. Zechariah in chapter 12 and verse 10 of his prophecy says that, “In the last days, God is going to pour out upon the children of Israel the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced.” Isn’t that a remarkable thing, that the nation Israel will look upon our Lord Jesus Christ whom they have crucified, and Zechariah says that, “They will mourn for him at that time, as one mourns for an only son.” In other words, by the work of the Spirit, they will come to realize who it is that they have crucified.

Now, when we turn to the New Testament, we find that prophecy used in three different places. It is used in John chapter 19 when Jesus is crucified and the soldiers pierce his side, and John says, “I remember that prophecy that said they shall look upon him whom they have pierced.” So he lays stress upon the fact, that it was at the time of his first coming that he was pierced. The prophecy of Zechariah then refers to the first coming, but the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24, in the Olivet Discourse, is speaking about the great second advent, and he says, “There is going to be a sign from heaven, and the Son of Man is going to come from heaven, and the clouds of heaven, and when the nation sees him, the tribes of the earth are going to mourn for him.” And so that part of the prophecy of Zechariah that has to do with the mourning, is referred to the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you’ll remember too, if you read the Bible a good bit, that in Revelation chapter 1 -- in the last book of the Bible -- Zechariah’s prophecy is again referred to. In the seventh verse of the Book of Revelation -- the first chapter -- John writes, “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” In other words, in John the piercing is stressed at his first coming; in Matthew, at his second coming, the mourning is stressed, and then Revelation chapter 1 gathers the whole thing together in one statement in saying, “And when the Lord Jesus comes the second time, they will see him whom they pierced in his first coming, and they will mourn for him.”

In other words, Zechariah’s prophecy has stages of fulfillment. There’s nothing strange about that, and so here in Acts chapter 2, it is my feeling that what we have is the prophecy of Joel is fulfilled in at least two stages. The first stage is the coming of the Holy Spirit. He has come. But the remainder of the prophecy awaits the second advent of the Lord Jesus. Now, let me point this out. The first part of this prophecy had to come on the Day of Pentecost, because the coming of the Spirit is part of the redemptive program of God, and so, as the result of the blood that was shed, the Holy Spirit is given to our Lord as a reward for what he’s done, and he from heaven at the right hand of the Father, sheds forth the Holy Spirit upon the Church of Jesus Christ. Read those prophecies, and you will see that what I’ve said is true to them.

One might ask the question then, “Why was not the whole prophecy fulfilled in the time of the apostles?” Well, I suggest that it was not fulfilled, because Israel was not responsive at that time. Jesus has said, “The kingdom of God is going to be taken from you, given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Paul talks about the olive tree and the branches that are broken off; the unnatural branches of the Gentiles grafted into the tree, and then ultimately in the future, the natural branches of Israel grafted back in, and the Abrahamic Promise is fulfilled for both Jews and Gentiles.

In fact, the door is still open today; open today to the nation Israel. That’s why Peter will say at the end of his sermon, verse 39, “For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” And then in the second message that he gives in verse 19 through verse 21 of chapter 3, he tells the nation,

“Repent therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ, which was before preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the

times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken, by the mouth of all his pro --
holy prophets since the world began."

In other words, the door is open. Israel may respond if they believe as a nation in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the remaining features of this prophecy shall be fulfilled.

It all seems so plain to me. I wonder why it is, that often in our theological seminaries, we hear professors say, "Now we have a problem here." That always interests -- interests me, because I attend so many theological classes, often taught by -- oh, I can tell you can tell I'm old now -- by young professors, who haven't had too many years of Bible study behind them, who will say, "Now we have a problem here. Now we have a problem here. Now we have a problem there." One gets the impression, that the Bible is full of problems. The Bible is not full of problems. The problems exist here. Here are the problems. "We have a problem here," means "I have a problem." The problem is not in the Scriptures. The problem is here, and I just testified to you -- I have often said that, I may still say that -- but most of the time through the years -- forty years or so of studying the New Testament now and the Old Testament -- the problems I've discovered are really here and not here. And if we go to the Scriptures, under the Scriptures, subjecting ourselves to them, waiting upon God to reveal to us what he wishes to reveal to us in his time, we'll generally find that our problems are solved.

Now, the prophecy itself contains three parts, as you can see. There is the outpouring of the Spirit. That's what Peter was interested in. He wasn't interested in the other part at this time. I think if he were standing on a platform here, and I would say to him, "Now Peter, have I given the interpretation that is correct?" He would say, "Absolutely right, Lewis." He said, "I don't understand why these people have not seen that, because if they'll just look at what I said, I didn't say those other things were fulfilled. I said the Holy Spirit was given. Now look," he said, "You take your Bibles." I don't speak as the Apostle Peter, you understand. I'm just speaking for him today. And

so he would say, “Look at the twelfth verse. It says; and they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another; what meaneth this? Now, I was speaking about that question they asked. They said; what does this mean, and what does this refer to? Why, it refers to the fact, that the -- we’ve had this mighty experience, and men have been filled with the Spirit, and have been speaking in other tongues. What does this mean? That’s why I said; this is that. In other words, the words concerning the Holy Spirit are the things that I was interested in. This is that. That is designed to give the answer to; what meaneth this? And then if you’ll notice as you read through what I said on the Day of Pentecost, in the thirty-third verse, I came near to my climax, and I said; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this; this, which ye now see and hear.”

So he’s talking about “this” all along; that is, the coming of the Spirit; the gift of the Spirit for this age. That’s on his mind, not those other details. They await the future. He will talk about them in his second epistle. So, “What meaneth this? This is that. He hath shed forth this.” It is the coming of the Holy Spirit that Peter has in mind. The prophecy is fulfilled partially. That concerning the Spirit is fulfilled.

Now, he talks about cosmic signs. These cosmic signs are devoted, of course, to events surrounding the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say to his students that, “When you speak about heaven, you should have your facial expressions correspond to your subject. Whatever you’re speaking about, have your facial expressions correspond to them.” So if you’re speaking about heaven, may your face light up and be irradiated with a heavenly gleam. Do I have a heavenly look on my face? I’m talking about heaven. Look like someone who’s talking about heaven. Let your eyes shine with reflected glory” he said. “But now,” he said, “when you speak of hell, well then your ordinary face will do.” [laughter]

So we have Peter speaking about the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have him speaking about the cosmic signs, and they’re associated with judgment, and so we should

be solemn, and we should be serious, because we're talking about things that may mean ultimate eternal judgment for us.

And finally, in the twenty-first verse we have the security of the people of God in those great days of the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord, when Jesus Christ comes a second time, to execute judgment upon the earth and deliver the people of God.

“And it shall come to pass,” Peter says, “that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

In the midst of all of the judgments of the present and the future, the one who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That's one of the greatest of the promises of the Word of God, and of course, it is a promise that gives, first of all, evidence of the certainty of judgment, because Peter calls upon men to believe, in order that they might be delivered. Judgment to come is certain and secure -- certain and sure. Peter speaks of that in verse 30 and verse 31; these judgments that are to come. And I think it's very striking that in the Old Testament in Joel, when he talks about “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”; gives this magnificent prophecy, just before it in the context are words concerning judgment, and just after it in chapter 3 of the Book of Joel we also have words of judgment. In other words, set in a black setting is this marvelous diamond of the promise of the Spirit, and of the universal call to men for salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are people who like to say, that we do not have anything in the Scriptures like the preaching of the eternal fire and judgment. As we've so often pointed out, when people say that men should not preach eternal damnation and judgment, they are suggesting that we avoid portions of the Word of God. It is fair, and it is Scriptural to urge men out of fear, to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Judgment is to come. In fact,

those who speak of judgment and of eternal damnation to come, are those who have the tenderest hearts toward the people of God. It is those who warn men of what they face, who are the best friends that men can have. We're not a friend of man or a friend of men or mankind, if we gloss over the warnings of the Word of God. We are doing them an eternal disservice if we do not warn them, if they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they have no hope for the future. And I say to you this morning, on my left and on my right, if you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are on your way to eternal judgment, and so "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" should be a word of great comfort and consolation to you, that you should immediately take advantage of.

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And notice it is "whosoever." "This," Mr. Spurgeon used to say, "is the plain man's pathway to heaven." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Joel said it. Peter repeated it. Paul repeated it in Romans chapter 10. They thought of this as an important sentiment. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You don't have to go to the Sorbonne in Paris, and get a degree there in order to be saved. You do not have to go to the University of Oxford, and learn the things that are taught there in order to be saved. You do not even have to go to the University of Texas, or even Aggieland to learn something that one must know in order to be saved. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord." That includes university graduates, non-university graduates, high school graduates, non-high school graduates, the poor, the rich, whoever we may be -- even Democrats and Republicans can be saved. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is a universal message.

What does it mean to call on the Lord? Well, there are so many ways in which we call on others. When we get in trouble in our business, we call on the boss. When as a little child we get into difficulty, we generally call for "mother," or occasionally "father." Or when we're in school, and we get in difficulty, we call on a professor. We recognize that we have a need. Sheep bleat for their shepherd, and Jesus says, the apostles say,

God says, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” If we recognize we’re lost sinners and need salvation, and call upon the name of God, we shall be saved.

Mr. Richard Weaver, who preached at Park Street before Spurgeon used to come into the congregation, and when he came to these great texts which spoke of the universal appeal of the Gospel, he frequently would come out of the pulpit, walk down the steps, and walk down the aisles, and point to the people in the congregation and say, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord; that means you. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord; that means you.” Mr. Spurgeon said he was not nimble enough to do that. If you knew Mr. Spurgeon, he was a man who had rapidly come to the front, and so he didn’t, and wasn’t able to do it, but that’s the force of it. It is “whosoever.” It is you.

Now if you say, “I don’t know whether I’m one of the elect or not,” what better way to find out, than to call upon the name of the Lord. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And if you should not call upon him, you have no excuse. You’re getting exactly what you want. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.” Call upon the name of the Lord, and the certainty and infallibility of the promise is stated by “shall be saved”; not may perhaps be saved, or probably will be saved. There are no provisos. There are no perhaps’. Listen. God saves all who believe his promise, because you see, if he didn’t save those who believed his promise, it would not only be you who lost your salvation, but something even worse. He would lose his honor as a faithful God, and he will not lose his honor. And so if you come to him through Jesus Christ, believing on him who died for sins at Calvary’s cross, come to the Lord. Call upon him to save you by the merits of what Christ has done. In your heart you shall be saved. What a great privilege to preach a Gospel like this.

Now, I close with a story that one of my old professors used to tell. James Stewart of New College Edinburgh used to tell the story of a group of soldiers -- a regimen of men who were making their way across to France in Word War I. They had come to

London under their colonel, and on one of the last nights before they were to make their way across the English Channel to the trenches and fight in Europe, they were entertained by a group of musicians. And at the close of the entertainment, the colonel stood up, and called upon one of the younger officers to give thanks to the musicians for entertaining them. And so the young man stood up, and he spoke out of his heart, and he gave thanks to them for being so kind to them. They were very grateful. They were appreciative of the fine music, but then he closed his comments by saying, “We’re leaving in a couple of days, and we’re going over to the trenches on the continent, and we’re going to face death. Is there anyone here who can tell us how we ought to die?” There was a big silence in the auditorium. No one was able to say anything, until finally, a musician got up, walked to the front, and then began to sing from Mendelssohn’s [indistinct] the aria, “O, Rest in the Lord.” That’s the way to die. That’s the way to die. That’s the way, incidentally, to live also. Rest in the Lord. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Call upon him. Call upon him now, as we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how grateful we are for these marvelous promises. There may be aspects of them that we do not fully comprehend. We are sure, that Thou wilt magnificently fulfill all of Thy Word, but if there are some in this auditorium who do not have the assurance of eternal life, may at this very moment, they simply say to Thee; O Father, I call upon Thee to save me...