



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 2:22-28

“Jesus of Nazareth: The Holy One of God”

TRANSCRIPT

We are studying, as Mr. Prier mentioned, the Book of Acts, and so if you will turn with me to Acts Chapter 2, we’re going to read this morning for our Scripture reading Acts Chapter 2, verse 22 through verse 28. Those of you who have been here since the beginning of this series a few weeks back, will know that I made the comment in the first two or three messages that the Book of the Acts is called in our Bibles, “The Acts of the Apostles.” That term, however, is not a term written by Luke, the author of this book. It was attached to the manuscripts of this book no earlier than the middle of the second century. It’s not a very accurate title in this respect, that it is not really the “The Acts of the Apostles.” When one reads the Book of Acts, one notices that only four of the apostles are referred to. If someone should say, “Well, the Greek title simply means “Acts of Apostles.” Well, that would be better than “The Acts of the Apostles.” But strictly speaking, the book does not give us primarily acts of apostles, so much as it gives us the acts of the Lord Jesus through the apostles and through others. That is evident from Luke’s opening words.

When referring to his first book, the Gospel of Luke, he says, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” So in the mind of Luke the historian, the Book of Acts is the continuation of what he was doing and

teaching. So we are to think as we read the Book of Acts, not so much of “acts of apostles,” still less of “the acts of the apostles,” but the “acts of the Lord Jesus Christ through apostles and through others.” This book is the record of the continued working of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That’s probably one of the reasons that the book ends so abruptly. It’s designed to impress upon us the fact, that the one who acted then is still acting in the history of the Christian church.

Now, on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came. He was given in response to the ministry of our Lord. Our Lord poured forth the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. And now Luke, because of the fact that there were some remarkable physical manifestations, and also the speaking in known tongues by individuals who had never studied them, that called for explanation. And so Peter is a spokesman for the eleven, and he stands up to explain what is happening, and he has said, first of all, that what is happening is simply that which Joel prophesied in his book. The Holy Spirit has been given.

Now he will continue, and in verse 22 he will dig just a little bit deeper into the account, and say that the foundation of it all is the ministry of Jesus Christ. So now in verse 22 Peter con -- continues by saying,

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

Now, at this point Peter, as one can tell from the study of this great sermon, connects what he has just said with the Old Testament Scriptures.

“For David speaketh concerning him; I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover, also my flesh shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the joys -- or, the ways life, and thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.”

That’s a citation from Psalm 16, and Peter applies it to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless this reading of his Word, and let’s bow now for a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee that we are able to gather on this, the Lord’s day, and bring our requests and petitions to Thee with confidence that Thou dost hear them and answer them. We know, Lord, there are different ways in which Thou dost answer us; sometimes by giving us the desires of our hearts; at other times by withholding them; at still other times, asking that we wait for various reasons, but we thank Thee for the promises of the Word of God, that Thou dost always hear us when we come through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And we come today with the requests of our hearts. We pray for the whole church, the body of Christ today, and we pray that there may be growth and development and fruit as the Word of God is preached, and as the saints of God are strengthened and encouraged and comforted.

And if it should please Thee Lord, through the preaching of the Word, we pray that some may come to a faith and trust in Christ for the first time, thus passing from death into life. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the preaching of the Word in this audience, but also wherever the Word of God goes forth today, and so we commit the

whole body to Thee. We know, Lord, there are many ways in which we differ from one another, but for those who have, in reality, rested their present and future upon the merits of the cross of Jesus Christ, we commit them to Thee, and we pray Thy blessing upon each one. May we each grow in grace as the days go by.

We pray for our country, for our president, for the people of the United States of America in this year of decision. We commit them to Thee. We pray, Lord, that by Thy sovereign providence we may be permitted to preach the Word of God freely in the immediate future and for as long as Thou dost will. We thank Thee for all of the outreach of the church of Christ, and especially do we pray for Believers Chapel; its elders, and its deacons, its radio ministries, its publications ministries, and particularly the tape ministry which goes out to so many places. O God, may Thy blessing rest upon it, for the glory of Jesus' name.

We thank Thee for the men who serve us in this congregation. Give them spiritual wisdom and guidance and direction and encouragement. We pray for the sick, for the troubled and perplexed, for those who desire guidance at particular points in their lives. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon them. We are grateful for all of the ministry that is ours by virtue of the fact that the Spirit has come and indwells the saints, and guides and directs them, and encourages them. We thank Thee, Lord. May today be a day of growth for us individually. Bless now as we sing hymns, as we listen to the Scriptures.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning as we continue our exposition of the Book of the Acts, is “The Apostolic Preaching; Jesus of Nazareth: The Holy One of God.” The apostolic preaching of Peter, above all, points us to the preacher's primary purpose, and that is to connect men with the living person of the Lord Jesus Christ. These saving events of death and resurrection mean that the Lord Jesus is not a figure in a book. Of course, he is a figure in a book, but he's more than a figure in a book. He is a living

presence. It's not enough to study the life of Jesus Christ as if he were simply a great historical figure, but it's more than that. He is a living person. The Lord is not simply a memory, but he is a personal presence. We don't think of our Lord as someone who lived in the past and concerning which we have some very tender and precious memories. The apostles never thought of the Lord Jesus in that way. They may have been tempted to, but when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, the things that may have been apart from this great event -- simply memories for them -- were reinforced as their own personal relationship to him through the Spirit. So Jesus Christ is not a memory. He is a presence. They may have wondered how they were going to get along, since he was no longer present with them, but the coming of the Spirit made it very evident that he was more present with them sig -- in significance than he had been previously, for now he was with every one of them, and with every one of them, all of the days and moments of every day.

And of course, the preaching makes very plain that a Christian is not only a man who knows about Christ, but he is a man who knows Christ. It is possible, of course, for us to know about Christ, and of course, it is significant to know about him. We may know about Queen Elizabeth. We may know facts about Sir Winston Churchill. We may know about Ronald Reagan. But there is a difference between knowing about someone and knowing that individual. They knew about Christ, but they knew more than facts about Christ. They knew him. And in the teaching of the New Testament, that is the aim and the goal of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that we shall not only know things about Christ but that we shall also know him personally.

Now, I don't want to say, and you know of course, I wouldn't want to say this. I wouldn't want to say what so many say, when they talk like this. They say, “It is not doctrine that we need. It is a relationship with the person that we need.” We can never have a relationship with a person without a doctrine. In fact, you could not possibly have a relationship with any person that you know without some doctrine about that person.

If you'll just think about it for a moment, of the people that you know, you know them, and when you express your knowledge of them, you express it as knowing things about them. It's impossible to know apart from doctrine, and so we've stressed over and over as you know, for twenty years, that we must study theology as well as be acquainted personally with our Lord. Our theology is to guide and direct us in our personal knowledge of the Lord. So we want to know about Christ, but we also want to know him through the things that we know about him. We're not going to say that theology is unimportant.

R.C. Sproul, who is a friend of mine, in one of his messages speaks to this point, and in illustration tells an amusing story of a meeting between a -- an astronomer and a theologian. The astronomer said to the theologian, “I don't understand why you theologians fuss so much about pre-destination, and supralapsarianism; about communicable and incommunicable attributes; of imputed and infused grace, and things like that. To me, Christianity's very simple. It's the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The theologian replied, “I see what you mean. I get lost in all of your talk about exploding novae, expanding universes, pulsars, quasars, black holes, theories of entropy, and astronomical perturbations. For me, astronomy is simple. It's twinkle, twinkle little star.” [Laughter] So we -- we are not trying to make things simple. We're trying to set forth what the Scriptures say concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It's very important that we know facts about him, as well as knowing him through these facts.

The Apostle Paul put it very well when he said, “For which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed.” Now, that is por -- important. That personal aspect, “I know whom I have believed.” But then he goes on to say, “And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” You see, his persuasion of our Lord's keeping ability is founded upon theology; facts about Christ that he has come to know.

Now we're in the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and here suddenly there has come from heaven, this amazing miracle of the appearance -- sound of a rushing, mighty wind, then the cloven tongues like as a fire, sitting upon each of them, and then “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

And men were gathered from the nations of the earth there, and they listened to these individuals upon whom the Spirit had come, and the Parthians, and the Egyptians, and others heard individuals speaking in their own language. And knowing, of course, that they had not studied these languages, but nevertheless, they were able to speak in them, they saw the hand of God. It was a mighty working of the Holy Spirit, by which individuals who had never studied a language, were able to speak in known tongues. They were not steep -- speaking in ecstatic speech. That would have meant nothing, because ecstatic speech was known long before the time of the New Testament. Men spake in that way in ancient Persia, and others, and today of course, we have it in religions such as Mormonism. So ecstatic speech is no proof of anything, but when a person is able to speak a known language that he has never studied, and speak it fluently, and give forth the mighty works of God, that is a miracle. And of course, it testifies to the power of God.

Now, the individuals were amazed. They were perplexed. And some, as you might have thought, were mocking. They were saying, “Look, these fellows are full of new wine.” And so Peter, standing up as the spokesman for the eleven is to give an explanation. He stands up in the midst of this great crowd of people to explain what has really happened. Mr. Spurgeon, many years ago when he was the head of the Pastors College in London, received a letter in which he was asked, “Can you send us a preacher who will fill our church?” And Mr. Spurgeon wrote back, “No, that is not a preacher's job to fill a church. I'll send you a man to fill the pulpit. You fill the church.” And of course, he was right.

The reason there was a great crowd in Jerusalem was not because the church had been active. They had not put billboards all around. They had not made announcements that Peter is going to preach on the Day of Pentecost in the temple area, but God had done something. He had caught the attention of the multitude with what had taken place, and then Peter stands up empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver a message upon the occasion. These ideas of the way in which we attract people are simply modern ideas. The church on fire; the church inquiring about spiritual things; the church active; the church vigorous. This is the way churches are filled, not by a preacher, but by the individuals who have caught the life that is in Christ and are making it known in their community.

So there's a great crowd there, and Peter rises to explain. He speaks, evidently, for the eleven, as we've been saying, “primus inter pares”; first among equals -- not because he was the first Pope, but simply the spokesman of the eleven.

Now, we have also in this passage, a magnificent illustration of the harmony of two great biblical doctrines. You noticed it as I read verse 23, for Peter says, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain.” Theologians have sought to harmonize the two great doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. And while Peter doesn't argue the point here, in other places other information is given -- and fuller information -- it's quite obvious that he regards these two doctrines as perfectly harmonious, even though we may not be able to fully explain them. The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; the sovereignty of God, and then human responsibility. You'll notice that I said, “The sovereignty of God and human responsibility,” not “the sovereignty of God and the free will of man,” for there is no such thing as the free will of man, speaking Scripturally.

Oh, one might argue that there is in this sense; that we do what we want to do, but the Scriptures make plain, that after the Fall, our nature is touched by sin, and when

we do what we want to do, and do it freely -- of our free will -- it is always negative with respect to the purpose and will of God. So in that sense, we have a free will. We are free to do out sinful will, but we cannot do that which is pleasing to God. We are unable to save ourselves, apart from divine enablement. “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.” These are fundamental facts of Christianity. I prefer to say we don’t have a free will, because most people think of the term “free will” as the ability to decide either for or against God of ourselves. That is not our privilege.

So the two doctrines are not the sovereignty of God and the free will of man -- there is no such thing in the sense in which I’ve explained it -- but the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. If God is sovereign, and does his will, how then can we be responsible? How can we be held responsible? That, of course, is a legitimate theological question, and that is raised by Peter’s comment here. In a moment, we’ll say just a little more about it, but not seek to explain it today, because it would take a much longer time. I’m not sure that I could explain every question that you might have. After all, I’m finite. God is infinite. He preaches through his apostles both of these great teachings, and we hold fervently to them. As the days go by, we learn more and more about them, as we believe them, but perhaps we haven’t learned everything about them yet.

Now, the first thing that Peter does is to explain what’s happened is the gift of the Spirit. That gift of the Spirit characterizes the whole age between the first coming of our Lord and the second coming of our Lord. This is the age of the Holy Spirit. He has been given to believers in Jesus Christ. The gift of the Spirit. Now, the gift of the Spirit is the reward -- the concluding reward for our Lord’s saving ministry. Remember he had said, “You stay in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. You stay in Jerusalem until you receive the promise of the Father.” The Father has promised the Son the gift of the Spirit, and the Spirit has promised the apostles and others, that he will give his Holy Spirit. He will pray the Father, that he will send us another Comforter, and so when our Lord ascends to the right hand of the Father, he receives from the Father the

gift of the Holy Spirit, and he pours out the Holy Spirit. This is the age of the Spirit. Our Lord is at the right hand of the throne of God in his bodily presence, and the Holy Spirit is his vicar upon the earth, doing the will of the Son, teaching us, guiding us, indwelling us, all of the other many ministries that he performs.

But how is it all possible, one might ask, after Peter has said, “The Spirit has been poured out. That explains what has happened.” So it’s natural for him now to turn to explaining the work of Christ, and that is what he does in Verse 22, Verse 23, and Verse 24. He will review the causes that lie back of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the crucial phases of his life -- his life, his death, and resurrection -- receive attention from Peter. He says in Verse 22, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles.” Approved of God. Isn’t that interesting? Accredited by God, we might render that participle that is used there. Accredited by God. In what sense was Jesus Christ accredited by God? By miracles, wonders, and signs. Notice those three works -- words, incidentally, to describe the miracles that Jesus performed. Miracles; mighty works of power. Wonders; things that were works of power, but which amazed those who heard them. And then signs; miracles which pointed specifically to certain spiritual truths. John’s Gospel majors in signs; things that pointed to spiritual truth. Miracles, wonders, signs.

I had a student some years ago who was a very innovative student. He now works for a Christian publishing house writing. And he had a gift of writing even then, but as a young man, he had some innovative ways of explaining things, and on one of the papers that he handed in to me, he was trying to show in visual form, the difference between miracles and wonders and signs. And Mr. Schultz’s column “Peanuts” was very, very popular among the students at that time, and so he illustrated it by drawing some pictures of the characters in “Peanuts.” And for the word *dunamis*, the word that means “miracle, in the sense of a mighty power,” he painted Lucy swatting Linus, and he put by it the term “Wham.” And that’s the miracle that is a mighty work of power. And then the

next for a “wonder,” he had a character seeing something unusual and saying, “Wow.” And then finally, he had Snoopy on his belly crawling through the grass scenting something, and underneath was, “Why?” So “Wham. Wow. Why?” Miracles, wonders, and signs.

Now, these are very important things. One might think it was just an accident that Jesus came, and performed mighty miracles. But no, the students of Scripture would have known they had a particular purpose with reference to his ministry, because it was stated in the Old Testament that the way in which you will recognize the Messiah is that he will perform certain signs. If you turn to Deut -- to Isaiah chapter 29, for example, it is stated that he would perform certain kinds of miracles, and then that is expanded in the 35th chapter of the Book of Isaiah. I know what you’re saying. I haven’t looked at Isaiah in months. Well, of -- we -- if we don’t look at the Scripture over and over again, how shall we understand the Bible? Well any way, in verse 5 and 6 of Isaiah 35, Isaiah says, “When the Messiah comes he will heal lepers. He will cleanse people. He will perform these very mighty works, and specifically, he will open the eyes of the blind,” which the Old Testament says only a God can do. He will do these signs in order to accredit his ministry as Messiah.

They were the identifying signs for people who were looking, and so the Lord Jesus performed his miracles, his wonders, and his signs, and when people saw them, many of them got the message. Some didn’t. Perhaps the great majority did not but many did. And in fact, some of them said when they saw the signs, “God has visited his people.” Nicodemus said, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” So the miracles, the wonders, and signs were designed to mark out the Messiah, and his ministry in performing these tasks, was to bring people the conviction, “He is the Messiah. The Scriptures have said that the Messiah when he came, would perform these acts. Jesus of

Nazareth is performing these acts. No one else has ever performed these acts. He must be the Messiah.”

That is what was the goal and aim of these mighty works, and so Jesus healed the leper. He healed the centurion servant. Actually, Peter’s mother-in-law was healed -- a great miracle. And he stilled the storm. These were things, of course, that cannot be copied -- stilling the storm, a nature miracle -- the greatest kind of miracle. He cast out demons. He healed the palsic man. All of these things. Remember, Matthew points out in Chapter and Chapter 9 of his book, in order that his readers as they read his Gospel would say, “He must have been the Messiah.” So Matthew, right at the beginning, marks out these things as ways by which you can tell that Jesus is the Messiah.

You notice how, in reading the Scriptures, how much is grounded in the Word of God. We live in a day -- in a day of experience. Everything is experience. Everything is emotion. In fact, I was so disappointed yesterday. Before the great pageant that took place last night out in the West, one of the men who was responsible for it was telling why he was doing what he was doing, and everybody, no doubt, thought it was a great pageant. I don’t deny that it was. I didn’t see it all. I saw enough to see what it was going to be like, but I had other things to do. I’m not against that kind of thing, but what interested me was the reason why the man said they were having this kind of pageant. He wanted to show to the world, what the United States stood for, and from where we had come. And so we’ve come from Country Western. We’ve come from, well, New Orleans kind of music, and we’ve come from -- and then he said, after he had said all of these things which, if that’s what my country stands for, what a poor country we have. But anyway he said, “I want, above all, to make it emotional.” Emotional. There’s nothing wrong with emotion. We should be emotional, but our motions ought to flow out of our perceptions, out of our mind. When we are not dominated by our intellects, with our emotions, we are sure to go astray. If our faith is based upon experience, then its based upon a shallow foundation. Our house is built upon sand. Our faith is not

grounded upon emotions and experience. It is grounded upon the facts of the Word of God as they have taken place in history itself.

We sing in our meetings, “He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me, and talks with me, along life’s narrow way. He lives. He lives. Salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives.” And what can we come up with? “He lives within my heart.” How do you know he lives within your heart? What assurance do you have because you say, “He lives within your heart,” that he does? You see, we know he lives within our heart, because the Scriptures teach that he does. As they are taught to us by the Holy Spirit, then we know that he lives within our heart. It’s fine to say, “I know he lives, because he lives within my heart,” but if that’s the only basis for your faith, you don’t have anything but the shifting sands of human reason. That’s all. Human experience. It’s worthless, in the final analysis.

Do you notice what the apostles say? They don’t preach like our modern preachers. They preach biblical doctrine. They preach the great facts of the faith. They don’t talk about experience. They don’t talk about the nice little things of shallow superficial -- superficial Christianity that we find so prominent today. They talk about the great facts of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and they point to the connection between these facts of our Lord’s ministry in the Holy Scriptures, which are the foundation of the faith that they proclaim. And that is the kind of faith that will satisfy in the midst of the storms of life. No other faith will be equal to the experiences of life, but one grounded in the great facts of the Word of God, as taught us by the sovereign author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit himself.

Now, having talked about his life, he talks about his death. Peter later says that his death was foreknown. Yes foreknown, because foreordained, for even God cannot know anything ahead of time that has not been foreordained by him. But here he says, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” Notice the order of those words, incidentally. “The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of

God.” For it is by the foreordination of God, that God himself knows what is going to come to pass. He determines. He knows. “The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” In other words, Peter meets, head on, the problem of the Christian scandal, and the Christian scandal is this; we trust in a crucified Messiah. That was a scandal to Jewish people. They regarded this as a weakness, and the Gentiles regarded it, of course, as foolishness. So foolishness and weakness, but it is this to which Peter points, as the ground of our faith, the Christian scandal, the crucifixion of the Messiah. And he said, first of all, that it was predetermined by God; that Jesus Christ should suffer. The divine plan, was that the Messiah should suffer.

A man who did not understand his nature would say, “Why must he suffer? We want a great king who will come striding in upon a mighty horse like Pegasus, or something like that, and he will take over the affairs of this earth and run them according to the divine sovereign will. But what we are given is an individual who could not even stand up to the Romans ultimately, and the Jewish leaders who managed to lay their hands upon him, crucify him, and throw him into that tomb. And even the apostles were so disturbed that they went off in hiding; hiding like wounded animals.”

Peter meets it head on. He says, “Look, this was foreordained by God. It is foreordained by God for the simple reason, that we cannot have any great king before our sin has been paid for. We must have redemption before we can have a kingdom of God upon the earth, and so his death is absolutely essential for the gift of the Spirit and also for life. It was predetermined by God.” That’s why the Lord Jesus on the Emmaus Road said to those disciples, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written.” Notice, he grounds what he is saying in the Scriptures. “Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory.”

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself, and when they got through that day, they had all the experience that anyone would ever want. They said, “Did not our hearts burn

within us while he talked with us along the way?” not “while we talked with him,” but “while he talked with us.” From the burning heart, soon the blazing vision, and these individuals when Jesus has left them, cannot even wait until the morning. They rush back to Jerusalem in order to tell the others what had happened to them.

You see, he must die in order for our sin to be paid for. It's as simple as that. That's the Christian scandal. There is need for redemption before kingdom. But notice, that though this was the predetermined plan of God, those men who crucified him are guilty. They cannot say, “Well, we only did what was predetermined by God, therefore, we don't have any blame.” No, Peter says, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” In other words, the predetermining made the deed no less a crime, even though Peter will show it's the means of deliverance.

Now, if you are puzzled by that, that's all right. The important thing, is that you see that this is the teaching of Holy Scripture, and that God finds no difficulty in affirming the predetermination of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and at the same time, the sinful responsibility of the men who crucified him, Gentiles and Jews.

Why did he come then? Isn't it amazing that people will say, “Well, he came to confirm the moral law”? Jesus taught us little that was new in ethics. One can find almost all of the ethics of Christianity in the Old Testament. After all, this is one book; one divine revelation from God. The same God who inspired the prophets and Moses inspired the apostles. He's the same God who speaks in his Son. That's not surprising. Of course, our Lord gave a deeper interpretation of many of the things written in the Old Testament, but so far as the ethics of the Old Testament are concerned, they're very much the same as the New, and in fact, usually people today will speak of the ethics of the Scriptures, as a Judeo-Christian ethic, because it's essentially the same. In fact, the only thing that some Jewish men have pointed out that is found in the New Testament that's not in the Old, is the picture of the Lord as a shepherd going out for the sheep. And one

of the leading Jewish men has said, “That’s a new thing; the idea of a seeking God.” I don’t really think that’s new. In the Book of Genesis in chapter 3 when God goes down into the Garden of Eden to talk with Adam and Eve after they’re fallen, that’s the seeking God right in the beginning of the Word of God.

Why did he come? Why, he came in order to make it very plain that we needed redemption. If he came only to give us an example, then everybody’s sins are ten times blacker after he has come than before he came, because no one has ever lived the kind of life that Jesus of Nazareth did. Men don’t like, however, the doctrine of sin. They don’t like the doctrine of original sin. Did you notice the other day, incidentally, when Jesse Jackson went down to Cuba, and as a result of going down there, a few people were freed. Among them was a Seventh Day Adventist; a man who preached. Do you know why he was in prison? He was in prison for twenty years for preaching original sin. Fidel doesn’t apparently like that doctrine; original sin. Twenty years in prison. He had a -- I think, an eighteen-year sentence, and they kept him on after that. Preaching original sin. Men don’t like to be told that they’re sinners, but the Scriptures say it over and over again.

If, for example, the Lord Jesus came only to tell us the kind of life that we should live, then I think I can sympathize with the fellow who said, “God, save me from the Sermon on the Mount when I am judged in the last day.” He recognized that he could never live up to the pattern of life set out in the Sermon on the Mount. Men say the best way to preach sin is to preach the cross. Well I agree, but there are two different ways you can preach the cross. You can preach the cross as the revelation of human sin, of what God requires. You can preach the cross as that which God requires for the forgiveness of human sin. You can preach Christ as the sin offering, and the fact that it was necessary for the infinite God Man to die, in order that the infinite blackness of our sin might be cleansed away. Well, that’s great, because nothing is more indicative of human sin than the fact, that they -- Jews and Gentiles -- combined in crucifying God’s

Messiah who came to save us. There is no greater sin than that; no greater act of rebellion.

But then others preach the cross in a different way. They preached it -- they preach it as if it were a kind of decorative ornament. You know, we have a little cross hanging around our neck, or we have other kinds of decorations. Even William D. G. T. Shedd, a hundred years ago said, “If the cross is merely held up as a decorative ornament like that on the breast of Belinda, which Jews might kiss and infidels adore; if it be proclaimed as the beautiful symbol of the divine indifference and indulgence, there is no conviction of sin.” That’s why people can have a cross hanging around their neck, and nobody pays any attention, because it’s an ornament, and the cross is not preached as the condemnation of men, and preached as the source of forgiveness because we deserve eternal judgment. Ah, that’s different. But Peter was different. He preached that.

And then finally, in Verse 24 he adds, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” The human decision has been reversed by the Lord God in heaven. There’s a remarkable mixed metaphor here when he says, “Because it was not possible that he should be holden of it, he loosed the pains of death.” That term “pains” in the Greek New Testament, is a term that refers to a woman’s birth pangs, and so the picture is of the birth pangs of death, almost as if death was everything that death could possibly do to hold Jesus Christ. But God loosed the birth pangs of death, and our Lord, because of the infinite perfection of his being, and nature, and work, our Lord is raised from the dead by the Father in token of the fact, “I accept the work that the Son has done for the forgiveness of sinners’ sins.”

Now, next week we want to take a look at Psalm 16 in more detail, so I won’t say anything more about it than this. It’s evident that Peter introduces Psalm 16 as justification for what he is saying, and specifically he is saying that David spoke of the resurrection of Christ, because after all, David’s grave is with us; his flesh saw corruption.

Therefore, the psalmist, when he speaks about the fact that his flesh will not see corruption -- “Thy will not leave my soul in Hades or Sheol” -- why then, we could not have been speaking of David, because David has seen corruption. You can see his grave right over there on the side of the hill, just a little to the south of the city. And so therefore, David must have been speaking typically of someone who is bigger than David; the son of David himself. And thus, if that is true, then our Lord Jesus is the living one to whom God has made known the ways of life, and he is the Holy One, or the covenant head of David’s seed.

Well, I think it’s easy to see that Peter is preaching the sovereignty of God, the responsibility of men, and he wants us to avoid the extremes of Arminianism’s denial of the sovereignty of God, and also the extremes of the denial of human responsibility, which some Calvinists have unfortunately been guilty of. We believe in the sovereignty of God. We believe in human responsibility, and we believe the Scriptures teach these two great truths.

Joseph was one who was sent into captivity by God through his brothers. And notice how he speaks of it. He says, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me. You are guilty for what you did. You sold me into captivity.” But God meant it unto good; to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. So they did evil. They were guilty. But it was God who sovereignly worked to the end, that David might be in Egypt, and when the time came for Jacob and the sons to need help from Egypt, they received help from Joseph who had become the prime minister of the land of Egypt, and for the greater good, God determined that the evil exist, that the good might flow from it.

Jesus was sitting at the Last Supper. He looked at the apostles and he said, “The Son of Man goes as it stands written concerning him.” In other words, “I -- my death has been prophesied by the Old Testament. It has been determined by the Lord God that I go to Jerusalem and die. The Son of Man goes as it has been written concerning him.” But speaking specifically of Judas, “Woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is

betrayed.” And so the sovereignty of God and the human responsibility of wicked men are held in the mind of God as doctrines that are taught in Holy Scripture.

Peter in a few moments will say that, “The Lord Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ, and that the way of salvation is through trust in him.” If you are here today, and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to put your trust for the grace of God -- for you cannot do it apart from his grace -- in the one who has offered himself an atoning sacrifice for sinners. That means for you and for me. He has offered himself an atoning sacrifice for sinners. And as we come, nothing claiming of ourselves, but clinging simply to the merits that our Lord has won by his saving work, as we believe in him, giving ourselves to the Lord God, he gives us in marvelous grace, eternal life.

If you are here, and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you as an ambassador of Christ to put your trust in him, by the grace of God. Believe in him. Trust in him. Don’t leave this auditorium without the sure sense of the forgiveness of sins through that which Christ has done apart from all of your wicked past.

And if you’re here, and if you don’t want to do that, you don’t want to accept this free universal invitation to believe in the Son of God and receive eternal life, perhaps even you’re saying, “I may not be one of the elect. It may not be determined that I should believe on him.” Let me say, no one can know those things. You can settle that question by believing in Christ. If you come to him, you discover you’re one of the elect; one of those determined by God to come. If you don’t want to come, my dear friend, you’re getting precisely what you want. You have no complaint. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Don’t leave this auditorium with that question unsettled. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these magnificent words spoken by the Apostle Peter. O, we give Thee praise and thanks for the guidance of the Holy Spirit

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as he spoke. How often we have pondered these words. We know, Lord, the experience that flows from the faith in them, and, Lord, if there should be someone here who does not know forgiveness of sins, O God, right at this very moment sew work in their hearts that they give ... [end of tape]