



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“The Great Tribulation,” Matthew 24:15-28

TRANSCRIPT

Now will you open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 24 and listen as I read verses 15 through 28. Matthew chapter 24 verse 15 through 28. Week before last, when I was speaking, we began the subject of the Olivet Discourse in our continued exposition of the Gospel of Matthew, and we treated in brief fashion the first fourteen verses, and now we hope to treat in the same brief fashion verses 15 through 28. The Lord Jesus, according to the Evangelist Matthew, said to the disciples in answer to their questions, when shall these things and what shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the age,

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whosoever readeth, let him understand:) (You can tell from that little parenthesis there ‘whosoever readeth’ that this is the comment of the evangelist Matthew who has inserted this in his account of our Lord’s discourse.) Then let them who are in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto those who are with child, and to those who nurse children in those days!

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be serve saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

Now our subject this morning is “The Great Tribulation,” and we’ve had a number of announcements and so I hope that you will pardon me if I am a little bit more succinct than is than is ordinarily my custom, and I will try to finish relatively soon after we pass twelve o’clock.

Our Lord forever silenced the notion that we should not study prophecy by giving the disciples’ questions concerning the future the longest answer that he ever gave to any of their questions. Now we should remember certain guidelines in the study of prophecy if we wish to avoid strange and bizarre views so characteristic of much of the Bible teaching of the 20th Century. We need to remember that it is impossible for human beings to prophesy. The Lord gave forth the challenge through the Prophet Isaiah to all of the false gods to tell the future if they could, and they are unable to do it.

There is a deliciously ironic Chinese proverb, “To prophesy is extremely difficult especially with regard to the future,” [laughter] and I’ve always liked that because it certainly expresses an important truth which we sometimes forget. And it is important that we remember that prophecy is the province of God.

There have been two major errors in the study of prophecy. One has been the error of the historicist, who looking back over the past has sought to put the historical facts of the last centuries in parallel with statements of the holy Scriptures especially the Book of Revelation, and seek to find in the past the fulfillment of the prophetic word.

This has been particularly true of those who have interpreted the Book of Revelation from the preterist viewpoint, or from some historical viewpoint, and it was especially true of those who recovered the truths of justification by faith and others at the time of the Reformation. They looked back over the fifteen centuries preceding and sought to interpret those centuries in the light of the Bible, and so they identified the historical events of the first fifteen centuries with the events that are set forth in the Book of Revelation.

The only difficulty with that was the simple one that after a hundred years passed, it was evident that a new fitting had to be made. And so a century later they would reinterpret the events of the past and fit them into an expanded interpretation. So they were very much like an accordion player who pulls out his bellows farther and farther getting one more wheezy tone from his instrument. The preterist of each generation keeps pulling the prophecies on to cover the most recent events. Many of them have already torn the seals loose from the Book of Revelation, they have blown the trumpets, and the vials have been poured out according to them. That is one of the errors that we should avoid.

The other error is the error of the futurist, who looking at the prophecies and then looking about him seeks to identify the teaching of the prophetic word with the things that are happening today. I commented upon that two weeks ago when I commented

upon the attempts to identify the anti-Christ with Hitler and with Mussolini and with Stalin and others. These two types of errors we should avoid when we study the prophetic word and remember that human beings do not prophesy, cannot prophesy.

Another thing that we need to remember is that our own human interpretation is often an interpretation that is weak due to the fallibility of our own thinking. Now I know the Holy Spirit has been given to us, and we should be more dependable in our interpretation of prophesy as a result of the presence of the spirit in this age. But the facts are that we still are human beings and often our human nature intrudes into our interpretation of the prophetic word. I think if we remember that when the apostles were here at the first coming of the Lord Jesus with the Old Testament Scriptures and we remember that they still understood very, very poorly the teaching of the prophetic word, it would make us a little humble in our attempts to interpret the prophecies as we see them today. If they erred so significantly concerning the first coming, it is possible that we should err in details concerning the second coming.

And then I think we should not use that as an excuse not to study the prophetic word. There are some who do use that as an excuse and say, since the disciples do not understand the Old Testament, and since so many have failed to understand the New Testament the evidence of that is their strange and bizarre interpretation of prophecy, perhaps we ought to just abandon the interpretation of prophesy entirely. No we should not do that. It is necessary that we seek to interpret the word of God. It is useful and profitable for us, and in fact the Bible states that one of the great sources of morality among Christians of a true spiritual life is the hope of the things that are set forth in the word of God: “He that hath his hope in him purifieth himself,” the Apostle John said concerning the hope of the Second Advent. So we should study the word but we should just remember that we are human beings and do not interpret the word perfectly.

I am reminded of the medieval maps which we often see in our history books when we are reading about the works of the explorers, and when we look at the maps

that the medieval cartographers managed to manufacture, we sometimes wonder how in the world they were ever able to find anything. In fact, when we look at the maps we are inclined as 20th Century people to look at them with a great deal of condescension and say, “We do things so much better.” We should remember this. Those maps, while they were very inaccurate, were the maps by which they were able to make great discoveries even with the inaccuracies that characterized them, and furthermore, the maps that we now know today would never have been made were it not for the fact that they were preceded by a number men down through the years who explored and did do the work of making maps. So I think of myself as something like that when I seek to interpret the prophetic word. I recognize that there are many weaknesses in the interpretation of the word that I myself shall give, but I know that it is useful and it is profitable and it is expected of me that I should study the prophetic Scriptures.

The subject of the Great Tribulation is one of the giant subjects of the Bible. One of our young people, our young people would say it’s one of the biggies of the Bible. For if you look in the Old Testament you will find that the prophets prophesied of the time of trial that would precede the coming of our Lord. The Book of Daniel is given—a large portion of the Book of Daniel is given to that subject. When we turn to the New Testament we not only have the Olivet Discourse, but we have the Book of Revelation which itself is largely given to the exposition of events that take place during Israel’s seventieth week so this is a big topic.

Now I think it would help us to review just for a moment the prophetic calendar, and again I hope you realize that we cannot be as certain about each of these events as we are about some, but let me just, for a moment, review the things that the Scriptures seem to say about the future so that we will be able to take what we are looking at in Matthew chapter 24 and put it in its proper place.

The Bible reveals that the course of this present age of which we are a part will be characterized by the growth of the true church that has been taking place down through the centuries. The numbers who are enrolled in the true church are increasing as the years go by. It also reveals that there shall be growth in professing Christendom so that we have a wide influence of the Christian church from the standpoint of its profession. There is a great deal of apostasy within it, and that is the other thing that the Bible reveals that there will be tremendous growth of apostasy within this professing Christian church.

Now if we are perceptive and are keeping up with the things that are happening, we will agree, I’m sure, that these three things have been happening in the present age in which we are a part. The hope for which we look is the translation of the church into the presence of the Lord Jesus, and at that rapture of the church, the dead saints shall be raised given resurrection bodies. The living saints shall be caught up given resurrection bodies to be with the Lord Jesus, and then to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards for their labors as believers.

Following this, according to the holy Scriptures, there is a period of trial and tribulation upon the earth. It is the period of time Daniel refers to in his 9th chapter when he speaks of “the seventieth week of Israel.” During that seventieth week of Israel – a week of years, or seven years – the Bible says that there shall be a series of prophetic events including the rise of world government, the rise of the Beast, or the anti-Christ who shall make a covenant with the Nation Israel, establishing the ancient worship again evidently in a restored temple in the city of Jerusalem.

At the midpoint of that, that seven year period of time, at the point of three and a half years, Daniel tells us that the covenant shall be broken. Then the Israelites who are faithful to the Scriptures shall learn that instead of being a man upon whom they can count, this man of sin, this anti-Christ is really a false Messiah. There shall then follow the tribulation judgments. The Bible speaks of this last three and a half years as great

tribulation in which the judgments of the Book of Revelation are poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth. It is the time of the wrath of God.

Concluding that period of time will be the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, the judgment of the Nation Israel and the judgment of the Gentiles. We shall have something to say about that when we reach chapter 25 of this prophecy.

Then follows the Messianic kingdom of our Lord upon the earth. After that the Great White Throne judgment, where all past accounts are settled for all the lost, and then the creation of a new heavens and a new earth or the eternal state.

Now that is just an outline of the future so that we will be able to place the things that we are talking about here within that general calendar of prophetic events. We are living in remarkable days today, I think we all would agree, because of the things that have happened in the land of Palestine. Since 1948, there is a Nation Israel in Israel. David Ben-Gurion, a year after Israel became a nation, commented upon the fact that they were back in the land and they were seeking as a national policy to gather Israelites from all over the world back into the land. And he said that what has happened is only the beginning. And it was only the beginning, because countless thousands have gone back to the land. The latest count is that there were over two million in the land. Now this varies a little in fact some years recently more have left the land than have gone in, but generally speaking the movement has been an increase of Israelites in the land of Israel. In fact, Israel has such an interest in this that they have a minister in their government called the Minister of Absorption.

Now we are going to turn to these verses that we have looked at, and we looked briefly, simply at the connection that is made in verse 15 with the preceding. The Lord Jesus had said, remember, that he was going to leave their house desolate, but he said, you shall not see me till you shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. So he prophesied a doom upon the theocracy, but he gave them a gleam of hope in that little word, until.

Now in these verses that follow he gives the how and when when of Israel’s return to favor, after they have been scattered to the four corners of the earth in divine discipline. The questions that the apostles asked the Lord were these: when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the age? And the Lord Jesus in verse 4 through verse 28 answers the first question, when shall these things be, by giving some indications of the things that shall characterize the period of time before the Second Advent, and then in verse 29 through 31 he gives the sign of our Lord’s coming and the end of the age. So the therefore, then, introduces instruction and admonition in the light of the statement concerning the coming end in verse 14.

Now remember in two weeks ago, I had said—I don’t really expect you to remember all of these things that I’ve said, so don’t take that, remember, too seriously; that’s why I’m repeating it—remember that these first verses 4 through 14 give us a kind of general picture of that seventieth week. Now in verse 15 through verse 28 we are going to look at some of the details in that seven year period of time. Its stress rests upon the disastrousness and suddenness of the end time events. Incidentally, disastrousness really is a word. [Laughter] I was afraid that it might not be a word, so yesterday, after I had written it down a week or so ago, I looked it up—I admit I had to look in two dictionaries to find it, but I did find it—disastrousness and the suddenness of the end time events is the prime point that our Lord makes in the opening part of his instruction beginning in verse 15 through verse 22.

He says, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place.” Now what is the abomination of desolation? It is not, incidentally, the defeat of the Cowboys last night by the Houston Oilers, because that was a preseason event. [Laughter] If it had been in regular season then that might have been a contending interpretation [more laughter] but we abandon that as false prophesy or false interpretation and concentrate on some other more substantial interpretations.

It is the interpretation of some of the students of the Gospel of Matthew that the abomination of desolation was the insigne which the Roman soldiers carried upon their standards when they entered the city, because on this insigne was an image of the emperor and that would be an abomination to the Jewish people, because it would suggest that they were to worship this image of the Roman emperor. However, I think that in the light of the fact that the Lord Jesus seems to speak of this as something future, that is not likely.

Others have said it is a reference to, Antiochus Epiphanes IV’s attempt to Hellenize Judaea by erecting a pagan altar over the Altar of Brunt Offering approximately two centuries before this. Now that was an abomination of desolation for the Jewish people, for it was a desecration of the temple of God in the city of Jerusalem. Again, however that was an event of the past from the time of our Lord’s statement here, and we read here, when ye therefore shall see. Now that is true to the Greek text. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, for the subjunctive in this place has that future force. So our Lord was speaking about something that was future from his time of ministry to him. Therefore it could not have been anything in the past.

But what about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? Some interpreters have said the abomination of desolation was the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the desecration of the temple in 70 A.D. Well, that’s a better interpretation, I must admit, but it too labors under some difficulties. For you see, this statement here is a statement that identifies what is happening with what Daniel the Prophet spoke about.

Now if you turn back to chapter 11 of the prophecy of Daniel, you have a kind of picture of the future up to the time of the Second Advent, and then in chapter 12 verse 1 Daniel goes on to speak about a great tribulation such as the world shall never see. In the 9th chapter, specifically, when he speaks about the abomination of desolation in that place, he also locates that event in the end time events. So the combination of these

passages in the Book of Daniel would lead us to believe that what is referred to here is an abomination of desolation that is to be located in the future from the time of our Lord beyond 70 A.D. In fact, it is tied in very closely with the Second Advent in those passages.

What confirms this is that the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and also the Apostle John in Revelation 13 make reference to the setting up of an image of the anti-Christ in the holy place and a call issued to the whole of the world to worship that image. So that I think that it is fair to say that we cannot refer the abomination of desolation to anything in the past. We must refer it to the future. We must refer it to the setting up in the restored temple in the future, seventieth week of Israel, by the man of sin’s lieutenant, the False Prophet, of an image of the man of sin, and the call is addressed to all men to worship this image as the image of one who is God.

The Lord Jesus says, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet stand in the Holy Place (Matthew inserts the words, whosoever readeth let him perceive truly perceive and understand) then let them who are in Judaea flee to the mountains. So he now gives proper action for those who shall be living during that period of time when they see this image set up. It is the signal for the abrogation of the covenant made between the anti-Christ and Israel in the middle of the seventieth week, and Israel the faithful who seek to follow the word of God discover that he is a false disciple, false Messiah after all. Disciples take note, Matthew says, and flee get away as quickly as possible, for the judgments of this human anti-Christ are going to fall upon the nation Israel. Flee to the mountains.

Many years ago when I was a student at Dallas Seminary, I was in my living room studying at a little desk that I had there. Someone knocked on the door, and I opened it, and there were two men who were there, young men, and after their first few words I realized that they were ambassadors of the sect of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I’ve always felt that the easiest way to deal with the Jehovah’s Witnesses is to ask the simple question,

how do we get to heaven?, for that usually reveals the error of their teaching. So, I said to them, how can you tell me, or will you tell me how I can be sure that I am going to go to heaven?

And one them said, why, you must flee to the mountain of God’s covenant. I said, “Where is that in the Bible?” I’ve heard of believing in Jesus Christ and a few other things, but I’ve never heard that I should flee to the mountain of God’s covenant. Well they didn’t know exactly where it was, but they assured me that it was in the Bible. I said, well perhaps, it so happened I had been studying this passage recently, perhaps you’re referring to the passage that says therefore let them in Judaea flee to the mountains. They said yeah, that’s it! That’s it. [Laughter] But I said well it’s a very difficult thing for me to do that, because in the first place, I’m in Dallas, I’m not in Judaea. And furthermore, there are no mountains in the immediate vicinity to which I may flee. Well they became immediately very exasperated and provoked that I would be taking the Bible in this literal sense that I should understand fleeing to the mountains as fleeing to the mountain of God’s covenant. Well needless to say we had a very interesting time of discussion, and at the end neither one of us were very convinced I’m sure of the position of the other.

Now he says that when this happens you are, if you should happen to be upon a housetop, you are just to go from housetop to housetop to housetop—that’s the way the houses were built in that day—to the gate and flee. Don’t even bother to come back in and pick up some clothes because you’re the danger is so great that absolute urgency is required. And finally he says, pray that your flight be not in the winter neither on the Sabbath day. Why the urgency? For he states in verse 21, for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Now, this it would seem to me, makes it very plain that the reason for the flight is not 70 A.D., because he says this great tribulation is such as was not since the beginning

of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be. Daniel, incidentally, in chapter 12 verse 1 reiterates that, that the time of tribulation is the greatest that the world has ever seen, and Daniel adds the words, “And Israel shall be delivered.”

Now a thinking Israelite would remember that though the Romans in 70 A.D. did do a great deal of damage to the nation Israel, the damage that has been done to Israel in the 20th Century is far greater. One only has to think of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and the other horror camps and ovens of the Nazis to realize that the tribulation of 70 A.D. is nothing to be compared with the tribulation of the 20th Century, and I am sure that those of us who are Gentiles would agree with that evaluation. The Holocaust of the 20th Century has been great, and therefore if it is true that this tribulation is such as has never been nor ever shall be, it cannot be the destruction of 70 A.D. It must therefore be something in the future.

And if we remember that when Daniel writes this, he says at that time Israel shall be delivered, and Israel has not been delivered in the Holocaust of the 20th Century, then we know that this is a reference to the future. And the great tribulation that he refers to is such that it is evident that the Nazis and the Romans are amateurs in destruction in the light of what shall happen during Israel’s seventieth week when God pours forth his judgments of the seals, the bowls, and vials upon the Nation Israel and the nations of the earth.

There was a comedian a few years back speaking about the nuclear bombs who said that they are now three sizes of nuclear bombs: medium, large, and where has everybody gone. [Laughter] And we all know the capacity that now exists in our society for the destruction of the society of which we are a part. The world shall never see anything like the great tribulation.

The Lord Jesus goes on in verse 23 through 28 to admonish the disciples, and incidentally, we have another one of these passages in which he speaks in the second person, but the second person is an address to them, but lying back of that is the

generation that shall be affected by these judgments. It’s the time of Jacob’s trouble, and he says in these verses that it’s a time of deception as well as of disaster. Verse 23 says, “Then if any man shall say unto you, ‘Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” You know I am so delighted to know that I am a true believer in the Lord Jesus, because I can imagine that the deception of these last days is going to be such that were it not for the fact that I am a true believer that I would be carried away by the deception.

Now let me show you just in a very simple way how this is possible. You’d rather think that it could not be. Well let’s remember one thing that the Bible says about the man of sin. The man of sin has a lieutenant who is the False Prophet. Now this False Prophet is said to have in Revelation chapter 13 the power to call down fire from heaven. That is exactly what this false man shall do.

Now when you reflect upon that in the light of some Old Testament events you can see how deceptive would be. For do you remember the confrontation that Elijah had with the prophets of Baal the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves or was the number reversed. Do you remember how that when Elijah called them out he said, let’s see who is God, and the God who answers by fire he’s the true God let him be God. And that seemed an eminently satisfactory thing, and so the false prophets were told by Elijah, take a bullock, I’ll take a bullock. You cut your bullock up and put it upon some wood in order that you may have a sacrificial blaze, and the God who answers by fire, and the fire that comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifice, that’s evidence that the God of heaven is pleased with that sacrifice, and the god that you worship is therefore God let him be God.

So you know what happened they gathered together it was a confrontation a classic confrontation the prophets of Bael and the groves they cut up their animal they put the animal on the wood and then they began to call on their god. They screamed out

their prayers to their god and nothing happened. This went on all morning. Finally, Elijah, which proves that Elijah was only a man, he began to taunt them. He said, perhaps your god’s gone hunting, [laughter] or perhaps he is still sleeping – he sleeps rather late doesn’t he? He’s a heavy sleeper, and other things some of which were not too nice, either, incidentally.

And in the midst of the taunts they still screamed and cut themselves and went through all of their other things in order to get their god to answer but nothing happened. And finally, after he had given them all the morning to call down fire from heaven, Elijah prepared his sacrifice, put his animal on the wood, then he said, now lest you think – he didn’t say this, but it’s obvious why he did – he said, lest you think that I’m a magician, I want you to take some water, and lets pour the water over the wood. And he did it once, and twice, and three times he drenched his sacrifice and his wood in water. In fact, he built a little trench around it so that it was sitting in water.

And then he prayed a simple prayer like you think all preachers ought to pray on Sunday morning, it took only about fifteen or twenty seconds really, to read it through, and he called upon God. And he said, simply, Yahweh, let them know who is truly God. And fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. The children of Israel said, Yahweh, he’s the God! Yahweh he’s God! And then they did what they ought to have done they went out and cut off the heads of all the false prophets. Those were vigorous days. [Laughter]

Now then can you not imagine the future in the midst of the tribulation period. The anti-Christ and his lieutenant, the False Prophet, and the False Prophet in the presence in the whole of the world calling down fire from heaven. And why the ones who know something about the Bible are most likely to be deceived. Why, it’s evident that the God that he serves is the true God. He’s able to call down fire just like Elijah did. Yes the Bible does say and I do believe; they shall show great signs and wonders

insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. But isn’t it interesting he adds, if possible, *if possible* they shall deceive the very elect.

Now I must say that this is a very difficult verse for my Christian friends who believe that you can be a Christian and then lose your salvation to handle. How can you handle something like this? Insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. I won’t bother you with the tendencious exegesis of some leading evangelical men who seek to avoid the obvious conclusion that it is impossible to deceive the very elect. If you want to read it, I have a note in the study bulletin, and you can look up a couple of references of attempts of men who are Arminian in their theology to explain away this text. Our Lord says very simply and plainly that they will do great signs and wonders that insomuch if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect, but fortunately it is not possible because the elect persevere in the faith.

This is one of the great texts on the perseverance of the saints. They do persevere. A person who has been truly born again and given new life is a person who perseveres. He does not fall into apostasy. He cannot apostasize from the faith. He must make progress in the spiritual life. Oh there may be some ups and downs. There are some sad experiences, such as the experience of David, but basically, the man who has been given new life has had a definitive change to take place in his life, and therefore he makes progress in spiritual things. He cannot go on living in sin.

If you see a person who has made great profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, but after this great profession has lived constantly in sin, you can say this, the Bible gives no assurance that that person is a genuine Christian. I cannot pronounce judgment upon them, nor can you. You cannot say that that person is not a Christian. We do not have that power within us we are human beings. But we can say this: the Bible gives them no confidence, because characteristic of the saints is they do not apostasize and they do make progress in the spiritual life. They cannot go on sinning, John says. So I am delighted when I see a text like this. It reminds me again of one of the great truths of the

Bible that those have truly been born again do persevere in the faith, and God preserves us from the deception to which so many seem so easily to fall into.

Well I must close. He says, Behold, I have told you before: wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he’s in the desert; go not forth: if he’s he’s in the secret chambers; don’t believe that because he’s to have a universal self-manifestation. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. So different is the claim of the Moonies, for example, the followers of Sun Yung Moon, and his blasphemous, apostate book called *The Divine Principle* in which he claims to be the Messiah, in which he claims that his Unification Church is the true church, in which he claims that the Bible is an outmoded textbook, and gathers numbers of disciples unto himself and many, many, millions of dollars.

You don’t have to read a book to discover whether the Lord Jesus is coming again. It will be a universal self-manifestation, the Lord says, there will be no question about it. The interpretation of verse 28 I leave for you to read in the study in the bulletin. Let me conclude by just making a couple of comments. The Great Tribulation lays to rest the idea that God is only a God of love. It is characteristic of our weak and pliable age to think of God as a God of love and a God of love only. God is love, but love is not God, and the fact that love is not God makes it very plain that God is more than love. He is a loving God, but he is also a just God. And the fact of the Great Tribulation makes it evident that there is a time when God finds it necessary to judge men.

And in the light of the terror of the Great Tribulation how important it is that we prepare ourselves for the future by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as Matthew the Evangelist who couldn’t resist adding a word or two to our Lord’s own words suggested, when he said, whoso readeth let him understand.

And so I say to you this morning it is very important that you too have an assured hope with reference to the future. The Lord Jesus has offered a sacrifice by the shedding of his blood which is an atonement for sinners, and if by God’s grace, and the ministry of

the Holy Spirit and enlightenment, you have come to the conviction that you are a sinner, therefore guilty, therefore under divine condemnation, this sacrifice is for you. And so as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus I do call upon you to put your faith and trust in him by the grace of God and receive the gift of everlasting life.

I know that things constantly happen. This past week a couple came to me and said we have now come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus through the preaching of the word in Believers Chapel, and now what shall we do in order to sever our connection with our present church and make connection with this church, because we find that the fellowship that we have with the previous church is there no longer. You see it is true the saints of God have the fellowship that they have with our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you’re here, we invite you to come to him. We don’t minister this salvation exclusively. This is something God has done through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and it is in you are each one invited to come to believe in him. May God give you grace to see your state before him and may he give you the motivation to come and receive him as your own personal Savior. It’s very simple. All one must do is to bow one’s heart before the Lord and say, Lord I do recognize that I’m a sinner, guilty, under divine condemnation. I thank Thee for Jesus Christ who has died for sinners. I’m a sinner. I want to cling to him and his saving work of the cross. I want to make the blood of the cross my only hope. I receive the gift of everlasting life. May God bring you to that decision. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the ministry of Thy word. We are thankful for the ministry of the Lord Jesus who loved us and went to that cross that there might be an atonement to which we might hold for everlasting life. And we thank Thee, O God, that that atonement is the hold that we as sinners have upon Thee. We cling to Him. We have no trust in ourselves, nor in the church, nor in any man, nor in any work that we might do. We do not trust our culture our education. We thank Thee, Lord, that

Thou hast brought us to see our condition, and Thou hast brought us to Christ, and we praise Thee.

Lord we pray that if there are some here who have not yet come give no rest to them nor peace to them until they come.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.