



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“The Second Advent, the Hope of the World,” Matthew 24:29-31

From our study of Matthew chapter 24, we have learned that following our Lord's coming into the city of Jerusalem, he had lamented their unbelief, and as he departed from the temple, his disciples had pointed out to him the temples and their beauty, being a little unable to understand the words he had spoken when he said, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” And shortly after that, as he sat upon the Mount of Olives the disciples had said to him, “Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the age?”

And then our Lord in the verses that follow beginning with the 4th verse through the 28th verse of Matthew chapter 24, had set forth some of the things that will characterize the future. He has spoken about various trends such as, nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and other natural disasters. He has spoken about persecution of the believers by others and that they would be hated of all the nations for his name's sake.

He laid a great deal of stress upon the fact that there would be false prophets and false messiahs. They would claim to be the Messiah, but the disciples were warned that they were not to believe such, that when the Messiah was manifested, everybody would know it. He had passed through the description of the seventieth week of Israel in which

God will execute his judgment upon the nation and the nations for their response to the gospel ministry, and as a result of it will bring the nation to faith in the Lord Jesus.

Now in verse 29 having discussed the tribulation period, the Great Tribulation, specifically, the last half of that week the last few years before the second coming of the Lord the Lord Jesus says in verse 29 of Matthew 24,

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (Now remember he had been asked what is the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age. In the 30th verse we have a specific answer to that question.) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

These accounts which are found, incidentally, in Mark and Luke as well, stress the fact that in the gathering of the elect, it is not only those upon the earth, but it would appear those in heaven as well. So there is a general gathering of the elect referred to there. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

Our subject for today in the continuation of the exposition of the Gospel of Matthew is, “The Second Advent, the Hope of the World.” Our society is characterized by the absence of hope and the presence of fear. “But there has got to be hope?” cries Mary, in the film *On the Beach*. A nuclear war has wiped out civilization in the northern hemisphere, and radioactive dust is gradually drifting toward the Southwest, and it is

evident that radiation sickness and death and oblivion face the people who are living on the coast of Victoria in Australia. And so the test comes, what shall we do in the light of the coming disaster? One comforts himself with alcohol as you might expect. Other takes reckless risks to win a motor race. Some pack as much as pleasure seeking as they possibly can into their remaining days. Open air religious crusades hold the attention of thousands, as you might also expect. But for Mary’s sake, Peter plants trees and buys a rustic garden seat in a charade of hope that somehow there will be a future for themselves and for their baby, Jennifer. There’s got to be hope.

But suppose there isn’t any hope. What then? The Apostle Paul spoke to this. He said for example, “If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth is profit me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” In other words, if there is no hope, there is only doom, and pleasure until the doom comes.

We have prophets of doom with us. I think we always have prophets of doom with us, but we have our share—in fact we may have more than our share today. We remember George Orwell’s *1984*. We remember Huxley’s *Brave New World*. I know that many people say, well we’ve been saying the world’s getting worse for centuries and it’s still with us, and that’s true. Our Western World has had its ups and downs. The Western World has gotten better upon occasions, and then worse down through the centuries.

There is a man who once said, “When I look at the younger generation I despair of the future of civilization.” I think if I were to ask you, if you had not looked at the Believers Bible Bulletin, who said that, you would be thinking of some modern man who probably uttered a statement similar to it. It comes as a little bit of a surprise to realize that Aristotle made that statement hundreds of years before the time of Jesus Christ. The Duke of Wellington said before he died a very old man, “I thank God I shall be spared the consummation of ruin that is gathering around us.”

So we have a strange situation. We have many things that indicate that the world is getting better materially and scientifically. We have Neil Armstrong. We have Buzz Aldrin. But then on the other hand, we have Hiroshima and Nagasaki and probably other disasters. Some people would include the Panama Canal in that.

I think our age has good reason to fear. It seems to me that there are many many sufficient reasons to fear, for example, the arms race. I believe very fervently in the fact that the United States of America should not unilaterally disarm. It really disturbed me no little when I lived in Britain for two years to hear the British speaking about disarming unilaterally. That seemed to be the most foolish kind of thing that a nation could do, and it really upset me to hear theological professors in one of the leading institutions of Great Britain advocate that in their theological classes, saying, that after all if we do become Communists it's not the end of the world.

Well it isn't the end of the world, of course, but I don't want to become a Communist. [Laughter] And furthermore, I think it's perfectly all right to arm ourselves to the teeth in order to keep from becoming one. But nevertheless, to arm ourselves and engage in any kind of arms race is a perilous thing, we have to admit that.

If we look around at the population crisis we cannot help but think that things are not necessarily getting better. It took two hundred years for the population to double between the years of 1600 and 1800, but then in the last few years the population is now doubling every thirty-five years, and so we do have problems that arise out of this explosion of people in our universe. How are we going to feed them and how are we going to clothe them?

And then we have the problem of inflation in which our dollar is progressively decreasing in value. Really, I think it's a form of silent or surreptitious stealing from the people, but it produces other problems beside that. And the preservation of our natural resources. Did you know that when a car travels six hundred and twenty-five miles, the oxygen expended in that one trip is sufficient for a man's life for one year. Did you

know, for example, that when a 747 travels from New York to Paris or London, many many tons, I think I have it in the notes, fifty tons of oxygen are expended in one Atlantic crossing. Already the United States produces only sixty percent of the oxygen that it consumes, and if we go on polluting the oceans and killing the oxygen-producing sea plants we are going to perhaps reach a stage such as that of a wild beast when it’s consumed all of its possible prey it then starves to death.

So we do have some severe problems and cause for fear looking at it from the natural standpoint. But in the final analysis the real problem is man himself, who after the fall, has an infinite capacity for fatuous folly. If there is anything that characterizes a man, it is that he is foolish. O, that there were men who longed for regeneration and faith. Why the Apostle Paul tells us that, naturally speaking, there are none such. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. There is none that doeth good, no not one. There is none righteous, no not one, not even up to one Paul says not a single righteous man in our existence.

Well is there no hope? Well there is some hope according to holy Scripture. There is hope for the individual in the regeneration and faith that God the Holy Spirit brings to men whose hearts he touches. And there is the hope of the second return of the Lord Jesus which has its collective benefits for all of our society. That’s the thing that the Lord Jesus speaks about here in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 29. He’s been talking about tribulation. He’s been moving, he’s moved into the Great Tribulation which shall be so great that nothing in the past has ever been like nor will anything in the future be like it. Incidentally, we are living in a day in the theological world, eschatologically speaking, in which there are individuals who are telling us that we as Christian believers are going to go through the tribulation.

Now I think that is a question that is worthy of some discussion. There are a number of very capable books that have been written on this topic, and a great deal can be said for a post-tribulational rapture. That is, that our Lord Jesus will not come until

after the tribulation period. And we who are pre-tribulation pre-millennialists should be secure enough in our belief to read these books and ponder them. They are in many cases honest attempts to see what the Scriptures teach.

I do think, however, that in the case of many of them, there has not been sufficient consideration of the nature of the tribulation. The Lord Jesus says, this tribulation is so great, that the world has never seen anything like it, nor will it ever see anything like it in the future, and it’s not a sufficient reason to abandon a belief in the pre-tribulational rapture to say that we must, all of us, pass through tribulation. The tribulations through which we pass in our daily life cannot even be compared with the Great Tribulation of the future. So I want to just say this in connection with it. I never I have not yet read anything in these books that has brought me to the place where I must abandon the view that our Lord Jesus is going to come before the tribulation period and catch up the saints to be with him.

Now in the light of that, if that be still the teaching of the word of God, then what our Lord is going to be speaking about here is the Second Advent which follows the intervening period of approximately seven years of which is called in the Bible, Israel’s seventieth week, in which God begins again to deal with the nation of Israel and ultimately to bring them back to faith in the Lord Jesus at the conclusion of that period of time.

So the Lord Jesus, then, in the 29th verse speaks of cosmic agitation. The tribulation merges into this great climactic experience of the darkening of the sun and the darkening of the moon and the falling of the stars from heaven—the powers of the heaven shall be shaken. Now I think it is very striking right in the beginning to notice that the Lord Jesus says, immediately after the tribulation of those days.

Now Mark says, “in those days,” suggesting that the tribulation and the Second Advent fall into the same general period of time. But the thing I want you to notice is that the Lord Jesus does not prophesy as the prophets of men. He is very definite in his

prophecies. They are characterized by generalities. There is a saying, “He who lives by the crystal ball soon learns to eat ground glass.” Well I can understand that, because human prophets do not ever over a period of time prophesy correctly. There was an advice given to some economic analysts in the *Wall Street Journal* just about a week ago, and it went something like this: give them a number or give them a date, but never both, because then they will discover that you’re not really analysts who can forecast the future after all.

All of you men have read no doubt the analysts or the various types of material that are available to those who invest in the stock market, and you notice the things that are said in it, and ordinarily these are pieces designed to sell you some security. And they will look over the analysts will look over the past and on the basis of the past make a forecast with respect to the future. But there’ll always be a note somewhere usually in small print that we are not, of course, guaranteeing that the things that we are forecasting will come to pass. Human people do not forecast, and if they do forecast they always put it in very general terms so that there is a strong likelihood that any of a hundred different things might be considered the fulfillment of the prophecy.

There was a Roman Catholic priest who in the earlier part of the 19th Century came to the conviction that the second coming of the Lord Jesus would take place in 1847. Now of course, he wanted the imprimatur of the church of Rome upon his writings, and so he requested approval of the publication of his manuscript on the second coming. And he was told, finally, by the hierarchy that he could publish the book in 1848. [Johnson, congregation laughter] The Lord Jesus Christ’s prophecies, however, are definite. Immediately after those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give its light.

Now the words that our Lord Jesus speaks here are words that are taken from the Old Testament, and they are blended together into a beautiful mosaic of Old Testament teaching on the Second Advent. In fact, I think that these passages that are brought

together bring us a kind of fore-gleam of the subduing of the earth and the heavens by the Son of God at his Second Advent.

Now what I would like for you to do if you have a Bible with you – and I don’t understand why you come to Believers Chapel without a Bible with you – but if you happen to have a Bible with you will you turn with me to Isaiah chapter 13 and verse 10, because I want you to see this morning, since we have just a brief section to consider in the exposition, how the Lord Jesus studied the Old Testament Scriptures, and how he used them in his own daily life and ministry.

Now in Isaiah chapter 13 and verse 10 – this is page seven hundred and twenty-four in the version that I have before me – in this context the Lord is speaking about the Lord’s judgment upon Babylon, and as is often the case in the prophetic word of the Old Testament, the local situation is designed to be the instrumentality by which prophecy is ultimately given that stretches out into the distant future. And here it is plain that the day of the Lord is in view – that final climactic day in which the Great Tribulation shall take place. The 6th verse reads, “Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.” And then in verse 10 we read, “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine.”

Now it is clear that the Lord Jesus has used these words in the prophecy that he gives in verse 29 of chapter 24 of Matthew. Turn with me over to the 34th chapter and the 4th verse of this same prophecy of Isaiah, for the other part of verse 29 is taken from verse 4 of this chapter. Here we read in the 4th verse, now and again we are speaking about the time of the tribulation Verse 2 has said, “For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies,” and in the 4th verse we read, “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree,” so that you see what our Lord has done is to take passages from the Book of

Isaiah in the 13th chapter and the 34th chapter, and he has woven them together into the prophesy of verse 29 of chapter 24 of Matthew.

Now we do not have in our English Bibles any indication of this, other than marginal references. If you read a Greek translation or a Greek New Testament, you will discover that most of them are edited in such a way that the passages that are taken from the Old Testament and are cited in the New are put in heavy print in the New Testament. So that if you open a Greek New Testament, you can just take a look at the heavier print and you will know that it is the opinion of the editors of that text that these are the passages from the Old Testament upon which the New is built.

Now when you come – incidentally I do think that would be a good thing for an English Bible also – it would be good for us to have the passages from the Old Testament that are alluded to or cited in the New Testament in heavy print so that we could see the strong reliance upon Scripture by the New Testament apostles and by our Lord.

Now here in this 29th verse it is clear that what our Lord has done is to go back into the Old Testament, as he has thought about the day of the Lord and the events that shall transpire just preceding his Second Advent, and he has collected significant passages together, and he has put them together in one statement. Almost all of verse 29 would be in heavy print if we had a Bible in which citations and allusions from the Old Testament were put in heavy print. So he then is studying the Old Testament for us and letting us know its teaching.

By the way, the Lord Jesus did not study the Old Testament such as we study the Old or Old Testament or the Bible, simply. Now I don’t mean to say that the Lord Jesus was not familiar with the way in which the Bible was studied in the schools of the rabbis. He was. It’s evident he was familiar with their interpretations. He would say, for example, it hath been said by men of ol’ such-and-such, but I say unto you—it’s evident he know exactly what was being taught by the rabbis in that day.

But our Lord’s study of the Scriptures went beyond the simple study of the outward form of the text of the word of God. He reflected upon it. He reflected upon the principles that were set forth in those passages from Scripture, and he put them together so that he had a structure of theology within his mind. I’m speaking of our Lord as a human being. It’s evident that his use of the Old Testament is deep unusually unusual in its depth. It is reflective. It is the product of meditation. He undoubtedly had spent a great part of his thirty years previously just reflecting upon the principles that lie back of the word of God, the text of which he was so familiar with. So here, then, he says immediately after the tribulation, this great time of affliction and testing shall merge in a time of cosmic agitation.

There was a Bible teacher who was a very good friend of mine who used to turn to this text and say, “This is the time of the greatest blackout ever known.” Now he was referring to World War II in which in over the United States and other countries of the western world and the allies we used to have those exercises in which an entire city was blacked out because we were afraid the Germans might come over with their airplanes. But now we know blackouts on a different degree, and this blackout that we see here is greater than any that we have ever seen or ever shall see.

I wonder if we should take this as literal? There are commentators who say that we are not to take this as literal. After all the sun is not going to really be darkened, the moon is not going to come to the place where it does not give its light, and the idea of stars falling from heaven, well, that could not literally take place. And generally speaking, some illustrations are given, such as, well, A. E. Housman, has written in *The Epitaph Concerning World War I*, the day when heaven was falling and the hour when earth’s foundations fled. That was his description of World War I. Well, I think, that probably the poet gathered his terminology from the Bible, and he did speak figuratively. But to use that as evidence of the figurative significance of these texts is to me, wrong.

Now let me say this. When we study the Bible, the Bible is full of figures of speech, and the Bible is full of symbolic language, particularly in the Book of Revelation. John tells us in the first book of in in the Book of Revelation in the 1st chapter and the 3rd verse, that he is going to tell us a lot of things in symbol, so we should expect symbolic teaching in the Book of Revelation. And we have some similar passages in the Old Testament such as Daniel and some sections of the book of Isaiah. But ordinarily the Bible is to be understood as it is literally, and normally to be understood in its normal, grammatical, historic fashion.

You see, strictly speaking, there are two general approaches to Bible study. There are those who say that we should stress the symbolical and the spiritualizing, and there are those who say we should stress the literal, and each criticizes the other for some just reasons, but the important thing it seems to me is not whether there is the figurative or the symbolical in the Bible, or whether there is the literal and the grammatical-historical in the Bible, but what is the general rule that we are to follow and what is the exception. And it seems to me that the general rule is surely, in the light of the reading of the word of God, the literal grammatical sense of the word of God. So it seems, then, that this is to be taken as a literal, cosmic agitation. It is not beyond the power of our God to cause something like this.

Well having spoken, then, of the cosmic agitation agitation in verse 30 the Lord Jesus goes on to speak of the kingly advent in glory. They had asked, what is the sign of thy coming and the end of the age? And he says, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. So when hope’s fading in the midst of the climactic judgments of the Great Tribulation period hope returns in the person of our Lord Jesus at his Second Advent.

Harold P. Barker was a well know Bible teacher of a generation or so ago, and he used to tell a story to illustrate the fact that the hope of the world is really the Lord Jesus Christ. He said that there was once a grandfather or an uncle who had in his family a

young boy who had a box of bricks. They must have been something like a puzzle, like a crossword puzzle, but part the bricks were supposed to be put together in such a way that when they were completed you could look at the bricks and you could see an outlined map of the whole of the world. They were designed to teach geography.

And the uncle or the grandfather—I’ve forgotten which came into the room while the little boy was out once—and he began to fool with these bricks and try to put them together. And finally after trying, over a rather lengthy period of time, he just gave up in uh in uh failure because he couldn’t do it. Soon after the young boy came into the room and noticed that his uncle had been playing with his bricks, and he said, you weren’t able to put them together? And he said, no I wasn’t.

He said, “Really? It’s very simple.” And so he proceeded to put the bricks together in the proper place in just a very brief time, and the uncle said, well how did you do it? He said, well, I noticed that when I first got this set, I noticed that on the back of the bricks there was the face of man, and he said as a result, if I get the man right, I get the world right. And Mr. Barker used to use that as an illustration of the fact that when we put the ministry of our Lord Jesus in its proper place, then the history of the world falls also into its proper place. And if we remember the kingly advent of our Lord Jesus in glory and the things that are going to happen when he comes a second time to the earth, then our hopes and fears find their resolution in him.

He says, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.” So at the time of the cosmic disturbances this coming takes place. What’s the sign? The patristic commentators have some interesting interpretations of this, because they thought that what was meant by this was some specific, unusual sign. And so they thought that there would be some marvelous miracle that would be brought into the sky by the power of God, some, even saying that they thought there would appear at the time of the Second Advent a huge cross in the sky.

After the message this morning, one of the members of the congregation came up to me and asked me, “Did this have anything to do with Constantine’s purported vision of the cross.” Well I don’t know whether Constantine was affected by the interpretation of the Patristic commentators or whether the Patristic commentators were affected by the so-called experience of Constantine, but they did have the idea that God would bring some marvelous miracle in the sky that would convince everybody that the Son of man was truly coming. It seems much better, however, to take the sign to be the Son of man himself.

And so when we read, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, we should translate this, then shall appear the sign, which is the Son of man in heaven. In other words the sign of the coming is the presence of the Son himself, and that’s why all of the warnings against not heeding the false prophets have previously been given. If they say to you, he’s over here, don’t go. If he they say, he’s over there, don’t go there, because when the Lord Jesus does come in his Second Advent everybody will know that he has come. The sign of the Son of man in heaven shall appear, and it is the Son himself who shall appear, and evidently the whole of civilization shall be able to see him.

It is perhaps, possible, too in the light of the statement, they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, that there will be around him some form of glory, like the *shekinah* glory of the Old Testament. Remember, God led Israel through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud in the day and pillar of fire at night. The pillar of fire was the sign of the divine presence and that *shekinah* glory hovered over the the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, and over the temple for a while, until ultimately the glory of God departed from the temple because of their unbelief. So it is possible, perhaps probable, that when our Lord Jesus does come in his Second Advent there will be a blast of glory, that in the skies, that all shall recognize as the glory that comes from the one who is very God of very God. So he then says,

immediately after those days, there will be cosmic agitation and then there will be the kingly advent in glory.

And he adds, “And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” Now that’s a very interesting statement. I wish it were possible for me to talk about the Old Testament significance of the term, earth, and also the New Testament significance of the term, earth. The word *gē* in Greek, which is often rendered “earth” is a word that also means “land.” Now if it means, earth, if it means earth, we normally think about the whole of this globe, but if it should mean, land, then of course, we would think about the land; that is, the land of Palestine. And in the light of the fact that he says, then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, lends some credence to the interpretation that what he is saying is that when the Son of man appears in heaven, then the tribes for Israel, and its tribe shall be back in the land, the tribes of the land shall mourn. In other words, Israel shall come to the realization that it is the Messiah that they crucified when the Lord Jesus Christ was hanged upon the cross.

Now that interpretation gains also some support from the passage in the Old Testament in the book of Zechariah, which seems to be the passage that our Lord was thinking about. Zechariah chapter 12 verse 10 in which we read these words, “And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” Isn’t that a striking passage? Here the Lord, here the prophet speaking for the Lord, Yahweh it says, I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications. What is that? Why that’s Old Testament effectual grace which shall be poured out in the future. It is exactly what the Bible teaches when it speaks about God opening the hearts of people to believe. He will pour out upon these tribes, specifically here the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such a ministry of the Holy Spirit that they shall look unto—isn’t it startling that Jehovah should say—they will look upon me whom they have pierced?

Many have been the attempts of the rabbinic scholars to escape the obvious meaning of this text that it is Yahweh who has been pierced. And of course, we know from the unfolding of the divine revelation that this is a reference to the Lord Jesus. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for him as one is that is in bitterness for his for firstborn. In that day there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart, the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart, the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart, and the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart, and all the families that remain, every family apart and their wives apart.”

Our Lord is leaning upon this passage of Scripture and says that when the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, all the tribes of the land shall mourn over him. It’s a remarkable statement, and it shows how our Lord Jesus studied the Scriptures. He made them his own. He put them together, and he prophesies in the Olivet Discourse based upon his study of the word of God. And that great event of the future in which all the tribes of the land mourn is the last great triumph of the Son of God over Jewish unbelief.

I wish it were possible for me to speak about the passage in Genesis chapter 45 which I think is one of the great passages of the book of Genesis in which Joseph, having now finally got down into Egypt, having brought down into Egypt the the brethren who had originally thought that they had put him to death, now reveals himself to them. Some of the words that he speaks are just remarkable. Let me briefly read through the passage, “Then Joseph could not control himself before all them who stood by him and he cried, ‘Cause every man to go out from me (he wanted the Egyptians out of the way; he wanted to reveal himself to his brethren).” Now remember, Joseph is a beautiful type of our Lord Jesus, and the brethren of Joseph are a beautiful illustration of the Nation Israel, of course.

“And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren who had thought that they had put him to death. And he wept aloud.” Imagine it.

Weeping over the brethren that had thought that they had put him to death.

He wept aloud, and the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard they heard through the walls, the sobbing of Joseph the Prime Minister of Egypt. “Then Joseph said unto his brethren I’m Joseph doth my father Jacob yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were terrified at his presence.” I’m sure that there’s going to be some of that when the tribes of the earth look up and see the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and a nation is born again in a day. “Joseph said to his brethren, Come near to me I pray you, and they came near, and he said, I’m Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life.”

You cannot ever say that God does not predestinate evil. He does predestinate evil, but it is for a greater good. “He sent me before you to preserve life, for these two years hath the famine been in the land and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

I cannot help but believe that Joseph had a fair comprehension of the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. “Haste ye and go up to my father and say unto him, thus sayeth thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt.” And when the Lord Jesus comes in the air at his Second Advent and reveals himself to the nation Israel it is as King of kings and Lord of lords. They shall be terrified at his presence, but there shall be a great turning by the Spirit of God when they look unto him whom they have pierced, and then shall come the repentance and faith and the salvation of the nation in a day.

Well you know the conclusion of it. “He fell upon the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck, and he kissed all of his brethren. He wept upon them and after that his brethren, talked with him.” That’s the last great triumph of God over Jewish unbelief.

Well now finally in verse 31 we read, “And he shall send his angels with the great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Other great events shall occur. There’ll be a great congregation of the elect. I do not think – it may be so that this is a reference only to the elect of the Nation Israel – but I rather think that what is meant here is the gathering of all of the elect of God’s people, those that are in heaven already and those that are upon the earth they shall all be gathered together to the great Messianic king as he sets his feet upon the earth, in order that there may be the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth, with the elect participating, for they all have a part in it. It is a wonderful regathering to the land in belief.

What we see today in Israel is a gathering of Israelites in unbelief, but then we shall see a gathering in belief as God, according to the Prophet Isaiah, will beat the olive trees so that the olives fall to the ground and they shall be gathered together in one great harvest of the people of God. Then shall be fulfilled the promise of the blessing of the families of the earth in the seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a tremendous hope the hope of the Second Advent is. Do you have it? Is this part of your own Christian life, to have a hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus? Lord Shaftesbury, who did so much for Great Britain in delivering Britain from any of the evils of child labor in the earlier part of the 19th Century, was a Christian man. Near the end of his life he said, “I do not think that in the last forty years I have lived one conscious hour that was not influenced by the thought of the Lord’s return.”

Now we began by saying our society is suffering from absence of hope and presence of fear. I think the second coming is the ultimate solution, because it illuminates

the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus over the forces of evil. He will come again as the governor of this creation, and we are not, therefore, without hope. If we look round about us at the problems of life, the problems of population and pollution, and all of the other kinds of disturbances that lie about us, and if our eyes are so earthbound that we look only at them, we do have reason for fear. But if our eyes look off to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, there is tremendous hope.

After all, the word of God says, he is the first and the last. Why should I fear anything in the past if he’s the first, and why should I fear anything in the future if he’s the last? As one of the students of the word of God says, “If the last hour belongs to us, we don’t need to fear the next minute. Our destiny is in the hands of a loving, all-powerful God who knows how to control the affairs of life so that, ultimately he is glorified in the experiences of life. It would be a horrible thing to have to live life without a hope like this.

I’m so glad that how many years ago?—thirty-five years ago—God spoke to me in Birmingham when I was in business and brought me to the knowledge, even though it was Arminian knowledge [laughter] he brought me to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as my own personal Savior, and as I look back over these years, what a difference it has made. And I must say I if I had to live those years over again without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus that would be just cause for immediate suicide.

The second coming is also our ultimate hope because it underscores the fact that history is going somewhere. It’s moving to a goal. Tennyson was not far wrong, even though he didn’t have the true faith: “One God one law one element and one far off divine event to which the whole creation move.” Therefore we look into the future in the midst of the absence of hope with the presence of fear with confidence and a surging hope. And we reply and we pray, even so come come quickly Lord Jesus.

If you’re here this morning and you don’t have this hope, this hope is available by virtue of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus who has offered a sacrifice that is sufficient

for the sins of sinners. And if by the grace of God you have been brought to the knowledge of the fact that you are a sinner, guilty under divine condemnation, heading toward a Christless eternity, we appeal to you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, come to him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. May God so work in your heart through the spirit of grace and supplications that you look unto him who has been pierced, and that there come to you the experience and the mourning, spiritually, of repentance and faith, and the possession of the forgiveness of sins and justification of life in the blood that was shed. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for this great hope. How wonderful it is to look off into the future and think of the grate events that lie before us. The rapture of the church, the recovery of the Nation Israel, even though it be through great tribulation. The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus in all of the glory of the King of kings and Lord of lords; the kingdom of God upon the earth. And ultimately the eternal state the new heavens and the new earth. What a glorious future, Lord, Thou hast mapped out for the saints of God and what a joy and privilege it is to be one of that company.

O God, we worship Thy name, we praise Thee. And Lord, we desire that others may have the experience of the hope that we have. May God the Holy Spirit, Lord, work in the hearts of some here today and bring them to the knowledge of him who gave himself for sinners, bring them to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins through faith.

May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

“The Second Advent, the Hope of the World” by S. Lewis Johnson
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