

Sight and Insight

by Carl Armerding

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual vision and recognizing Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Duration: 37:15

Scripture: Matthew 5:17, John 1:29

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of truly understanding and experiencing the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He encourages the audience to use their spiritual vision and insight to have a deep understanding of Jesus. The speaker also shares a personal testimony of how he started preaching about Christ's person and work, and how it has been a lifelong journey of discovery. The sermon concludes with a reminder that there is still much to learn and explore about the person and work of Jesus.

Transcript

You wonder why we've turned to it, because these are days when people are looking for novelties, and if you can give them something new, then that's what they like. But the Scripture tells us we bring forth out of the treasure both things both old and new. And so if what I tell you this morning is very old, you'll know that it's true nevertheless.

John 1 and verse 29. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me.

And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel. Therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bear record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

And I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same as he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood and told his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. The verses which I have particularly on my heart, to begin with the verse 29, where you read, The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, seeing Jesus. Then you'll notice that he had another sight in verse 32, where he saw the Spirit descending in a bodily form like a dove.

And then we have also this in verse 36, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, and so on. I want to talk a little bit about spiritual vision. You know, when you come to think about it, these gifts which God has given to us, these natural gifts of hearing and of seeing, as well as the other things with which we are blessed, but these are two very wonderful gifts.

I remember in student days being required by my teacher to make a cross-section drawing of a human eye. I never had appreciated what the human eye could do, and what it was like, until given this assignment. If you've never tried it for yourself, get a hold of a textbook that gives the cross-section of a human eye, and just make a little outline of the number of things, the number of muscles that are there, and all the fine adjustments that are there.

And you'll come to the conclusion that there's no camera ever built that could match the human eye as God himself has bestowed it upon human beings. Of course, he's given this same gift to animals, but in a different way. We find as we examine the eyes of animals that they operate quite differently from ours.

For example, you take some animals cannot focus both eyes on the same thing at once. That's why as we read about the chicken who can look only in one direction with one eye, and looks in the other direction with the other eye, and she generally gets it in the neck when she tries to cross the road in front of an automobile. So that God has blessed us with this vision, so that we have a really stereoscopic vision.

We can see things and focus our attention upon them. Now all of these things, I believe, are merely illustrations of the spiritual. And of course, spiritual vision is far more important even than physical vision.

For those who have been deprived of physical vision, thank God, many of them have even more spiritual vision than some of the rest of us. This morning I'd like to talk about the way John the Baptist used his vision when he came to look at the one whom he had come to announce to the world. This man occupied a unique position.

There isn't another preacher in the world that has a position that John the Baptist had as the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ. Especially chosen for this particular job, and once it was done, nobody could repeat this. We can have thousands of gospel preachers now who can tell us about what the Lord has done, but there was only one man chosen of God to go before him to announce his coming, and that was John the Baptist.

The remarkable thing is that what John came to announce was something which you would have thought was very self-evident. For example, we are told here in verse 6 of our chapter. Let's go back to verse 6 of chapter 1 of John.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the light. To bear witness of the light.

Well, you say, light bears its own witness. Why, then, do we need a man to bear witness to the light? Isn't this a commentary? Doesn't this show that men themselves are blind to this? Because there's only blind people that have to be told that the light is shining. I remember an illustration given years ago by the late

Dr. Barnhouse.

He told of how he visited an institution for blind children. He had been invited to speak to these children, and he reported at the office, and the mason there took him to the room where he was to speak to the children. As he drew near, he heard the children running around and playing and making quite a noise.

When the mason opened the door, there was no light in the room. The children were playing tag, but they didn't need any light. They were just having a good time.

And then she slapped her hands to get their attention. By this time, she had turned on the light on the wall and slapped her hands to get their attention. And one little boy, thinking that the light was still off, he went over to the wall where the electric switch was, and the mason had to tell him, The light is on, dear.

He didn't know it. John the Baptist came along to tell people that the light was shining. And this is evidence, I say, that they were blind, spiritually blind.

But we don't have any evidence that John really saw the Lord at this time. He was a forerunner of the Lord, but he had not seen him. It's true that even before he was born, he leaped at the voice of the sound of the Lord's mother's voice.

Remember? When Mary came to visit Elizabeth, John, as it were, rejoiced even before he was born when he heard the voice of Mary, the mother of his Lord. But so far as we know, the first vision that John had of the Lord is right here in verse 29 of this chapter when it says, And the next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him. And I like to make a parallel between this and what happens to you and to me.

You know, it's when the Lord Jesus comes to us. You know, sometimes we reverse that and we talk about our coming to him. Both things are true, of course.

But the remarkable fact is, dear friends, that the Lord Jesus did come to us. If he had never come to us, we'd never come to him. He came all the way from Glory to come to us.

This is the thing that St. Paul speaks of, you remember, in the first chapter of 1 Timothy. He says, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all expectation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Yes, he came to us.

And isn't it remarkable that in this 29th verse of John 1, John sees Jesus coming unto him. And what does he see? This is remarkable. He doesn't talk about him now as the everlasting word, as he's introduced in the first part of this chapter.

He doesn't even speak of him out of the light who has come into the world. But how does he describe him here? He describes him in a way that suits the need of each and every one of us before we can ever go any further with him. What is that? He says, The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

That's the first vision that John actually had. So far in the record, here goes, that the first vision that he actually had of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

And I ask you, my Christian brother and sister this morning, what's your first vision of the Lord Jesus? Oh, some of us can remember when we were little fellows, we were taught to sing, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. And doubtless we had visions of our Lord as a babe in his mother's arms, and this of course is a very common picture of the Lord. But you know, it isn't until we know him as the one

who bore our sins that we really get to see him.

And even though I've never seen him face to face, this much I can say on authority of the word of God, I have seen him as the Lamb of God who not only took away the sin of the world, but in particular took a mine away. You know, this is the important thing, this is what makes it personal. And that, dear friends, is what makes it relevant, even in a day like this.

A much overworked word, as you know. I've listened to the arguments of some of these people who say, well, you know, many of these sermons we listen to now, they're not relevant, they're not meaningful. But I know of nothing more relevant, dear friends, than that which relates itself to a soul's eternal needs.

This is relevant. Whether you recognize it as such or not, this is relevant. And if you've never known the Lord Jesus as your Savior, this is your prime necessity.

And it is here that John the Baptist starts. And you'll notice the breadth of his vision. He not only sees a personal Savior here, but one who is finally going to remove sin from the universe itself.

That's what I take this statement to mean. He's taken away the sin of the world. He's going to put it away forever.

But what did he mean when he said, who taketh away the sin of the world? Did he mean by this that at that particular moment, the Lord Jesus was bearing sin? No. The scripture is clear as to that, isn't it? Saint Peter tells us in his epistle that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. In what sense, then, could John speak of him as he does here, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world? Well, perhaps a little illustration will make this clear.

My father was a builder. He built houses. And I can remember sometimes my father going down the street and people would say, there goes Mr. Armerding.

Mr. Armerding, what does he do? Well, he builds houses. But he wasn't building houses when they looked at him. He probably had one of us in each one of his hands taking us to meeting that particular morning.

But that was his business. He built houses. And that's what I believe John the Baptist means when he says this, that he's the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

He wasn't bearing sin at that particular moment, but that's his business. That was the prime purpose for which he came into the world, you see. And what a word this was.

And especially to those who stood listening to John who would understand this figure of speech, who would understand this type, because they were acquainted with the types of the Old Testament. The Passover lamb killed in Egypt on the night when God delivered his people from Egypt. Yes, all of that comes into the picture as we think of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

And again those words in Isaiah 53. He's brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before a shearer's dung. He opened not his mouth.

He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Yes. And then St. Peter tells us again in his epistle.

He came as a lamb without blemish and without spot to take your sin and mine. None of his own. But he's taking away the sin of the world.

Because if it hadn't been his own he never would have qualified to be a sin bearer for others, you see. Because the sin offering had to be a spotless offering. And the Lord Jesus qualifies because in him there's no sin, he hid no sin, he knew no sin.

Therefore he becomes absolutely qualified to be your Savior and mine. This is a wonderful vision. But now the second thing that John sees here in his passage of Scripture, and this is remarkable too, because we never think of the Spirit of God as being visible in the sense that the Lord Jesus Christ was visible.

And yet John says this down here in verse 32 of our chapter. He says, And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit, I saw the Spirit, descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. Now this is remarkable.

For a man to be able to see a being who never became incarnate. You look at this passage of Scripture, you say, now just what happened here? Well I believe what happened here was that God gave this man a vision that he never could have had with mere physical vision. He sees the Holy Spirit.

You know this answers the question for me as to whether we're going to see the Father and the Spirit in heaven. I believe we will. I know that very often this is explained, Yes, all of these three are visible in the incarnate Son of God.

And in that sense, of course, we can hear the words of the Lord Jesus saying, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also. But I firmly believe that when we get our new bodies and our new eyes, we'll have a vision like we never had now. And for me it's unthinkable, for example, to be in the Father's house and not see the Father.

And just as John here saw the Holy Spirit, so I believe God will make himself visible to us, even in his own distinct personality as the Father. In any case, John saw the Spirit descending in the form like a dove and abiding on the Lord Jesus. This is going to be the signal to John that this one was the Son of God.

And just as we see in the first picture, in the 29th verse, we see the sin bearer. But you know, Scripture is always careful to give us a balance of things. Lest we should overemphasize the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

He brings into focus here now his deity. And these two things are always kept in balance in the Word of God. The humanity of the Lord Jesus and his deity, which makes him absolutely unique.

Not another being like him in the whole universe. And we say this without fear of irreverence to the Father or to the Spirit, but here we have one who is absolutely unique. I know sometimes people forgetting the meaning of the word unique.

They try to strengthen it by saying it's most unique. Well, there ain't no such thing as most unique. You don't have unique, uniquer, and uniquest, you know.

It's just unique. It's in a class by itself. It cannot be compared.

That's what we mean by unique. That's why in the French language, for example, when the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as God's only Son, Saint-François unique, God's unique Son, he's in a class by

himself. And it is John who here bears witness to the fact that this one whom he saw as the sin-bearer is the Son of God.

Oh, beloved, don't let anybody ever rob you of that thought. That the one who died for you and me upon the cross of Calvary was not only a true man, and still a true man upon the throne of God, but God himself, manifest in the flesh. This is he.

But now I want to come to a third vision here, in those verses which we read. Verse 35. Let me read it for you again, please.

The next day after John stood and two of his disciples and looking upon Jesus as he walked. Notice the difference in the expression. Back there in verse 29, he saw Jesus coming to him.

But here he looks upon Jesus as he walks. And this produces another effect in John. But before I speak of that effect, I'd like to call attention to the difference in the words in the original language.

The word seeing in verse 29 and the word looking in verse 36 are basically the same in the original language. The only difference is that this in verse 36 has a prefix. And that difference is expressed in our two English words, sight and insight.

In verse 29 you have sight, in verse 36 you have insight, according to the original language. This to me is a very interesting distinction here. That John, as he got to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and as he saw him walking, there was an insight that he didn't have before.

This is what one might call the second look, or perhaps the third look. But in any case, the second look at him. You know, we all count a great deal on the second look at something.

The person who buys things at first sight generally finds out that he wishes he had waited a bit and taken another look. I found this was very sound advice that my father gave to me when I was just a boy. I'd come to him with some desire, I'd like to get so and so.

He'd say, well now son, why don't you sleep over that and take another look at it tomorrow. Take another look at it. Then if you still think you'd like it, well then let's talk about buying it and so on.

I wonder if you've ever taken this second look at your Lord. You've seen him as your saviour. Have you seen him as the one who's your example, walking before you? This is what we get here.

And you notice that when this is described here again in verse 36, you notice something is dropped here. When he looked upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God, but it doesn't say anything about him bearing the sin of the world now. Why not? Well that isn't the point to be emphasized now.

The point to be emphasized now is the person of the Lord, you see. In the first instance we had the work of the Lord emphasized, but now we have his person. And this recalls something said to me when I was just a young preacher.

In fact, I didn't even write the name of preacher. I had given my first public testimony to the Lord on the streets of Halifax, Nova Scotia. I'd gone up to Nova Scotia for my vacation, and a veteran preacher of the gospel got hold of me and took me down to an open air meeting, the street.

And to my great surprise, he opened a hymn book to a hymn which I knew very well, of which he himself was the author, shoved me out in a crowd, and he said, Sing it for me. Well that was quite an assignment, without a musical instrument to give you the pitch or anything else. Sing it for me.

Well, I took him up on it. I got out there and I sang it. I told all my friends, I said, Now, I'm under orders this evening.

This man has shoved me out here in a crowd to sing this, and I want to sing it for you. And after I'd sung it, I gave a testimony, what the Lord had done for me, that I really believed what I had just been singing about the Lord saving my soul. On the way home from that meeting that night, this brother put his arm around me and said, Now, Carl, you've made a start.

Go on preaching Christ, his person, and his work. Oh, I thought, my, why limit me to that? I thought that this is going to be too bad if I have to limit myself to these two things, the person and work of the Lord. Well, friends, I've been at it now for over more than 60 years, and I haven't exhausted it yet, as you know, what we're doing this morning.

This is it exactly, isn't it? That dear old brother had something when he said to me, You've made a start. Keep on preaching Christ, his person, and his work. You know what the difficulty is, friends? A lot of people acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, but they never really get to know him.

Never get to know him. The Apostle Paul gives us an example, doesn't he, in the third chapter of Philippians. After he'd known the Lord Jesus all those years and was now suffering in prison because of him, he writes to those dear Philippian saints, that I may know him.

How well do you know him? I'm thinking of a friend of mine. He's in heaven now. I was present at the funeral of his first wife.

She had borne him four lovely sons, but he never was very kind to her, never very considerate. She was more or less of a slave in the house. She did his bidding.

I can well remember as he was standing over the casket looking at her form, and weeping and saying, I never knew what I had till I lost you. Time came and he married again. A very charming lady.

I felt like nudging him, saying, Bert, I hope you'll find out what you've got before she dies. Beloved, do you have to wait until you get to heaven before you find out what you've got in the Lord Jesus Christ? Here John is describing the one whom he sees with rare insight. He sees him walking, and he says, Behold, the Lamb of God.

That's all he said. He doesn't say a word about him bearing the sin of the world now, because he wants to focus our attention now upon the person of the Son of God. And beloved, this is a wonderful way to read the Scriptures as one reads the Word of God, to pray that your mind may be filled not only with great thoughts about what he's done for you, but what he is to you.

This is it. What he is to you. Before my dear wife passed away some three years ago, a little more, she used to bewail the fact that she was lying helpless on her bed.

She says, Oh, I'm so sorry I can't do this for you, and I can't. I'm sorry I can't. And I had to tell her it wasn't now what she could do.

It's what she is. What she is. Oh, the value of a person.

Yes. But now I want to take you back a little in this chapter. I purposely omitted this as we were reading.

Come back, please, to verse 14 of our chapter for another vision. For another vision. If you'll just take this idea of vision and run through this first chapter of John's gospel, I think you'll be amazed at what you see here.

But let's look at this. John 1, 14, and the word was made, or became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld. We beheld.

Now this is a different word again. The word here translated beheld is the word from which we take our English word theater. And a theater is a place where people go to see something.

This is a spectacle before their eyes. And this word which the Apostle uses here when he says we beheld, as if he was looking at someone going across the stage of life. And that's the picture that is here.

Because it says here we beheld his glory, the glory of an only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He says he came and dwelt among us. And the word for dwelt in this verse means he tabernacled among us, he tented among us.

And the word for dwelt is the word from which you take the backdrop in a theater, the scene. And here's the Lord walking across the stage of life, and the Apostle says we beheld him. Like an audience sitting in a theater, we beheld him.

And the form of the word is such that it means they kept on beholding. In other words, they gazed upon him. And this is something you have to take time for.

You can't do this in a moment. It's something more than a passing glance, you know. You know, sometimes I see people thumbing through a book.

They'll go to a bookstore, you know, and thumb through a book, and here are some pictures in the book, and here are some pictures in the book. And you ask them a little later on, have you seen, oh yes, I saw it. But you didn't see it at all.

You didn't see it at all. And I'm afraid some people read the Bible this way. They go through it so many chapters a day.

I read chapters a day myself in more than one language. But there comes a time when you just have to stop and gaze. You know what I mean? And this does something to you.

First of all, it tells you something about the Lord Jesus. He's full of grace and truth. Two things that both of us need.

Both of these things we need every day. We need grace and we need truth. Oh, how thankful we are for the grace of God.

They can put up with us in all of our shortcomings and our failures. And how glad we are for the truth that shows us what he expects of us. But let us notice one more text of Scripture before we close this morning.

As to what it does for you, will you please turn to 2 Corinthians 3. 2 Corinthians 3 to see what this gazing on the Lord does for us. The last verse of 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, that is, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord.

Link that up with John 1.14. We behold the glory of the Lord. Not merely his humiliation. That's wonderful.

Not merely his perfect humanity. That's wonderful. Not merely his dying upon the cross.

Wonderful. We wouldn't, for one moment, minimize it. But what the apostle's focusing attention on here is the glory of the Lord.

You know, when you come to think of it, dear friends, this is important even to a sinner in his sins. You know why? Because this is the standard by which God is measuring men today. How do I know that? I know that from Romans 3, where he says, All have sinned and come short.

Of what? Ten commandments? No. Sermon on the Mount? No. Oh, I'm sure you haven't kept the Ten Commandments.

Just as sure as you wish you had that powder-blue Cadillac that the other fellow's got. You broke that Ten Commandments. Yes, but it doesn't say that.

All have sinned and come short of the Ten Commandments. For even the Sermon on the Mount, which is a higher standard, by the way, you know how the Lord Jesus put it, he said, It hath been said to you by them of old time, but I say unto you, this is higher. You know, sometimes when people say to me, I'm trying to live up to the Sermon on the Mount, I say, you better start with something easy, get busy on those Ten Commandments.

You know, after all, you can keep nine of the Ten Commandments without doing anything. Did you ever know that? You can keep nine of the Ten Commandments without doing a thing. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

No. Don't have any. You've kept it.

Thou shalt not make any graven image. Commandment number two. Don't do it.

You've kept it. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Don't use his name for profanity.

You've kept it. Even the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh thou shalt not.

Don't do any work on the Sabbath. You've kept it. There's only one positive commandment in the Ten.

And that's the one that says, Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, that thou mayest live long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. So I say, these Ten Commandments are really easy, you know. Nine of them you can keep without doing anything.

You can't keep the Sermon on the Mount that way. But I move on to this higher standard. When God says, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Where do you see that? In the face of Jesus Christ. There's the standard by which God is measuring men today. The glory of God has manifested in his wonderful Son.

What is the glory of God? Someone has defined it as God's moral excellence in display. And I think that's a good definition. God's moral excellence in display.

And where do you ever see it? As you see it in Christ. But now let's see what it does to us, and this will close. Notice, please, 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18.

But we are all with open face, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, our chains into the same image, from one stage of glory to another, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how it's done. This is not the prize of a weary struggle from the soul that is seeking to shine, but the fruit of the contemplation of the glory Lord that is thine.

Ever think about that? I believe it's the heartfelt desire of every true Christian to want to be more like the Lord. How do you get to be like the Lord? You get to be like the Lord by being occupied with the Lord. An old doctor once told me that he had noticed couples that had lived together for some 40, 50 years began to resemble each other.

Ah, just that, just that. That's so wonderful for a man when he isn't very good looking. A man is a good looking woman, has the hopes that someday he'll be good looking himself.

But you know this is the very best of good looks, isn't it? Oh, to remind people of the Lord Jesus. And I never speak along these lines, but what I think of a dear servant of Christ whom I had the privilege of succeeding over here in his ministry in the Bahama Islands some years ago, more than 50 years ago now. We were seated around the breakfast table and various servants of Christ were coming into the conversation and some of them were very roundly criticized and so on.

Then the name of a very dear friend of mine came into the conversation and I was all ready to fight. I said if they say anything against him, I'm certainly going to let them know where I stand. To my delight and surprise, my host said this, speaking of my brother in Christ, he said, No man ever reminded me more of his master than that man.

I could hardly wait to get away to my room, shut the door, get down on my knees and say, Oh Lord, for a reputation like that. Beloved, may this be the desire and longing of each one of our hearts to remind people of our Lord Jesus Christ. Use your spiritual vision, this insight that God has given to you.

Many of you have known the Lord for many years. You ought to be qualified now to have this insight into the person of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In keeping with what we've been talking about, let's turn to hymn number 271.

271 Gazing on the Lord in glory While our hearts in worship bow
There we'll read the wondrous story of the cross
Its shame and woe Every mark of darkness on her heaped upon the thorn-prone brow
All the depths of thy heart's sorrow Told an answering glory now

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8008.mp3>

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