

The Crisis That Demands a Christ Awakening

by David Bryant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a renewed vision of the supremacy of Christ and a re-conversion to Christ for all that he is in order to solve the crisis of Christology and experience intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 24:18

Scripture: Revelation 1:12

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing a story about a chameleon that adapts to its surroundings. He then highlights an article about 15 leading pastors in the nation, where only one mentioned the name of Jesus when describing their churches. This leads the speaker to question how it is possible to describe one's life or church without mentioning Jesus. He emphasizes the need for a Christ awakening and shares a personal testimony of his own despair in ministry and how he found hope in God.

Transcript

You've been listening to the first of a series of three messages on a national Christ awakening. The second message is titled the crisis that demands a Christ awakening. The key passage of Scripture you might want to read before listening is Revelation chapter 1 verses 12 through 19. Maybe you've heard the story about the little chameleon that got lost in a fabric store. You know chameleons are a small lizard that adapts to its surroundings, camouflages itself in order to protect itself. This chameleon wandered into a fabric store and when he wandered on to a bolt of red fabric he turned red and he wandered on to a bolt of blue fabric and turned blue, wandered on to another bolt of yellow fabric and obviously turned yellow, but then he wandered on to a bolt of scotch plaid and he blew up. Because he tried to relate to everything at once. Some of you came to this council meeting this week feeling a little bit like the chameleon on scotch plaid. I think all of us in ministry and individual ministry and our churches and even in whole denominations can sometimes feel like everything's just sort of blowing apart. And what I'm here to suggest to you is that there is a wonderful way forward and that is to bring all those disparate pieces that sometimes seem to even be working against one another and bring them back under a full experience and the reality of the supremacy of God's Son. Two days ago, I came in early and I met with about a hundred and fifty pastors here in the Cincinnati area, pastors across the denominations, pastors across the races. We spent three solid hours together exploring what we have a shorter time to explore together here and I saw happen there that morning for three solid hours what I'm seeing happening with pastors all over this nation and that is that there was absolute stillness. Now these are pastors.

I was a pastor I've been to so many conferences and I had to ask myself How is it that they would be willing to endure another three hours of just what seems like basic content? Well, I had nothing to do with a speaker In fact, they were not there because of the speaker because most of them had never even heard of me before They were there because of the topic and they were held almost spellbound Not by what I was saying, but by the person I was talking about Because there's a stirring in their hearts in the pastors of this city as there is in New York City where I come right and in Cities all across this land. There is a stirring in the pastor's hearts across the denominations That not only says that there's a new way to speak about Jesus that we've got to speak about in that way to our people that we've got to re-evangelize our own people But there's also a sense in the hearts of many of our leaders what I want to talk about here this morning And that is that we are in a crisis and it isn't a methodological crisis is an organizational. It isn't programmatic It's a spiritual crisis It's inside the church Much more than it's outside the church And it's the crisis.

I want to talk with you about this morning. Some would call it a crisis of Christology I call it a crisis of supremacy Stephen Proffo who teaches at Boston College in a book published a year and a half ago called American Jesus Surveys the evolution of thinking about Jesus in American culture and church over the last 200 years And he makes a couple of conclusions one of which is in the subtitle of his book when he says Jesus has become the icon for America That's like a mascot and then in one place He says for many Christians Jesus is like the pawn on a chessboard and we're moving him around To checkmate whatever is coming against us About the same time two months later Another book came out almost the same title called Jesus in America by Richard Fox out of Yale University in which he concluded much the same thing looking at much of the same ground and One of his conclusions went something like this. He said in America today.

We have a pantheon of Jesus's and Each one of us are choosing the Jesus that best fits who we are and what's our agenda about a year ago Christianity today the foremost Evangelical periodical of our day had a whole editorial on this Crisis and toward the end of that editorial the editors of CT wrote these words They said we are having a national conversation about Jesus, but they go on to say is it the biblical Jesus? Because the biblical Jesus probably makes little sense to most of our people The biblical Jesus is not a Jesus fashioned in our image the biblical Jesus they write is a consuming fire a raging storm Who shocks people into stupefaction or frightens them to run for their lives? the biblical Jesus Swirls like a tornado touching down leaving only bits and pieces of our former lives strewn in his path We need to talk with biblical honesty About Jesus who not only forgives but also demolishes all cultural images of him When we come to church Sunday mornings, we need to have a full supply of crash helmets Would that be something if our people came to church on a Sunday morning? expecting to be exposed to an even greater vision of Jesus before the Sunday morning was over that was going to be like a raging storm than a Consuming fire and it was gonna break their lives up into whole lots of new bits and pieces and pull it back together in a way They had never expected and so we'd have to hand out crash helmets as they walked into the sanctuary So they'd be ready for what's about to happen That's what CT said ought to be going on in our churches that kind of spiritual dynamic, but is that happening?

Is there a crisis of? Christology in our churches, I believe there is it is a shortfall listen carefully here comes the definition This crisis is a shortfall in how we see seek and speak About the glory and supremacy of God's Son. Let me repeat that this crisis is a shortfall in how we see how we seek and how we speak About Jesus in all of his glory and Supremacy, is there such a shortfall one of the leading secular periodicals at the end of January? I don't want to say the name of the magazine Because then you go and

look up what I'm about to tell you and I don't want to do that Because in this secular magazine read all across the country they interviewed 15 of the leading pastors of this nation Many of whom I know personally those I do know I know love Jesus with all of their hearts Every one of them are pastoring what we might call today mega churches They interviewed these 15 leading pastors in America and they asked them to take three paragraphs To describe what made their particular church unique And I read that with quite interest a sort of a full column with a picture for each one of the 15 but I was in shock when I finished the number of pages it took to describe all of that because Only one of those 15 leading pastors of our nation Evangelical pastors only one even mentioned the name of Jesus at all in their descriptions of What made their churches unique now, they mentioned many wonderful ministries.

They mentioned many dynamic Events going on and and the growth and all those good things But I sat back and I looked at my my this article and I said to myself How is it possible for any of us to have three paragraphs to describe? What is unique about my life or my church or my denomination and to write three paragraphs for the nation to read? and Not even think I mean, I'm sure it's just an oversight, but that's the shortfall Not even think to mention the name of Jesus Well, then two weeks later time magazine came out with a front cover story on the 25 leading evangelicals in America time magazine Said in its article that the evangelical movement in this country is probably the most influential movement of any kind Going on in our nation today and that very well may be true Time magazine highlighted 25 of the leaders in that movement.

I know many of them personally I know they love Jesus with all of their hearts But when time magazine took over eight pages to describe the evangelical movement in America today Except for one phrase in the second sentence of the second paragraph of the opening of that article The name of Jesus was not mentioned one other time And I sat back and I asked myself. How is it possible? Even if every editor of time magazine is an atheist How is it possible for them to report on? On the evangelical movement and all of its influences and Not sense that this movement is about a person who is so important to them that they will not change their mind And they will not change the subject and if we're gonna report of the evangelical movement, we have got to talk about him There was a survey taken of one of the largest evangelical churches in America if I said it you would know it Tens of thousands of members were surveyed. It's about two and a half years ago One of the most interesting discoveries was that over 50% of the members of a Bible teaching Christ proclaiming church That is committed to evangelism and all the rest that over 50% of their membership said that the greatest fear they have in their lives is The fear of intimacy with Jesus Christ Now they also said on the survey.

They love Bible study and they love getting into the scripture But something's happened here friends where the the vision of God's Son is presented in such a fashion That there's something about him that makes me want to run from him now John fell down as a dead man at his feet, but he didn't run from him In fact when he moved into silence he moved into intimacy with Christ in his supremacy I dare say if you took a survey in your congregation and they could be brutally honest Anonymous survey.

What is your greatest fear in your spiritual walk?

It would come out something like that for the majority of your people The fear of being intimate but why because there is a shortfall in how we see him How we seek him and How we speak to one another about him and it is that shortfall It isn't that we need to package Jesus and make him a little more palatable and a little more manageable We've done a wonderful job of that what we've got to do is get away from just Making Jesus the center of who I am and where I'm headed and what I'm doing and how I'm blessed and

move God's people to the place where they see themselves put at the center of who he is and where he's headed and what he's doing And how he is blessed because once we move them into that vision of God's Son Then the desire to know him even with fear and trembling to move into

intimacy with him will be there Automatically because that's when the Holy Spirit is given full liberty to do in our lives What he has come to do and that is to take the things of Christ That the father's given to him and to reveal that to us there is a crisis of Christology and this is not a new issue This is an issue that's been all through the the life of the church in fact If you go back to the Apostles Creed the Nicene Creed the Athanasius Creed if you go back to the great creeds of the church And then study the church councils That created the creeds and Then you look at the creeds and realize how each of the creeds Most of the content is about the Son of God and you study the history of what brought the councils together you realize that it was because there was one form of a

crisis of Christology or another going on in the life of the church that forced the church councils to meet and when they finally developed a document To reflect their conclusions most of the document talks about Jesus Because that was the crisis going on among them But it was a crisis all through the even the New Testament Church and that's why I read the book had us read from the book of Revelation chapter 1 because that vision of chapter 1 is for seven churches of Asia Minor and as you know those seven churches each get a piece of that vision in the letter that goes to each of the seven churches and Every one of those churches was in a crisis of Christology Some of them were in a crisis related to heresy that was actually contaminating their vision of Christ Some of them were in a

crisis of persecution sort of like the Christians to which the book of Hebrews is written where they were toying with the idea is Jesus so supreme that we need to stick with him, even if it costs us our lives and some of them were in a crisis of apathy or Self-sufficiency like the Church of Ephesus the Church of Laodicea But whatever the reasons each of them were having a crisis of how they viewed the Lord Jesus and not only Revelation 1 But the entire book of Revelation was really written to deal with the crisis of supremacy So when we get to chapter 19, for example, and John is so overwhelmed by all the visions He's seen of the mighty power of Jesus a Jesus very much Like what that editorial and Christianity today describes.

He's so overwhelmed by all of this that in chapter 19 He feels like he's got to worship But he doesn't know where to start and there's this angel in front of him and he figures that's a as good a place as Any and you remember he falls down before the angel and the angel says no.

No John don't worship me And then remember his next statement because he says The testimony to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy therefore fear God What he's saying is this whole book of Revelation John isn't about just historical events or future events this whole book of Revelation is from cover to cover a Testimony to who Jesus is in his supremacy. So you're your intuition to worship is right But you need to understand that this whole book was written to get you to Christ So did you see him for who he really is and for all that he is so you might fear God and fall down and worship him Even the book of Colossians was written to deal with this crisis of supremacy scholars suggest that the church in Colossae Which incidentally was the smallest church as far as we know that Paul ever worked with because it was in the smallest little town That he ever worked with the church. So we assume that the church was probably the smallest church But it was a church under siege There were at least two streams coming against the message of Christ in the life of these new believers One was the Judaizers and one was the Gnostics the Judaizers were saying listen Yes, you need to come to Christ, but there are a number of other things

you've got to do first Christ is not enough by himself and The Gnostics were saying oh, yes come to Christ What a wonderful place to begin but there are many other mysteries of God far beyond who Jesus is and you can start with him and then we'll help you move on to other depths and other levels Both of those streams were challenging a vision of the supremacy of Christ That's why the book of Colossians is essentially all about supremacy and its implications for Christian discipleship Because you see Paul understood and I say this now to every pastor in this room who has a church of a hundred or less Paul understood that the effectiveness and the power of the church in Colossae was not in the size of the church it rested in the size of their vision of the one who is the head of their church and That's true for every congregation and when our people believe that with all of their hearts when they see that fresh revelation of the supremacy of Christ when they are reconverted back to him for all that he is Then you have people who rise up like the the Moravians and say the lamb has conquered him We may be few in number, but let's get started let's follow him and see where he takes us a crisis of Supremacy a crisis in many hearts of many pastors in this room.

I'm almost finished But let me just give you a personal testimony of this It's about 20 years ago now But I came to a place of such hopelessness in my own life of ministry that I was ready to give up I was in despair. I felt so inadequate. I felt so disqualified when I compared myself to others in ministry and And I really wondered if God was ready to set me on the shelf literally and truly I did and there was a night And it was almost midnight I know that because there's the grandfather clock and one end of the living room and it was chiming out the quarter hours And there was a night when I sat on the couch in the dark alone, I Prayed every prayer I knew to pray I'd shed every tear I knew to shed and I was in silence Silence because I didn't know what to do next And as I sat there in the dark God began to bring to my mind a phrase So I turned on a light and picked up my Bible and read the rest of that little section It was from 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 the phrase was where Paul says I despaired even of life itself It's verses 8 to 11 2nd Corinthians 1 and I started reading how Paul said I do not want you to be unaware brethren of our afflictions in Asia how we despaired of Life itself I felt I had in me.

He said the sentence of death. Wait a minute. Wait a minute I thought to myself this is a spiritual giant This is a man in the midst of one of the greatest stories of missionary service in the annals of church history This is a man who knew and loved Jesus with all of his heart and he says that he was in despair Not even sure he could make it another step Wow, he knew where I was at because that's where I was sitting on that couch that night But then I went on and read the very next words when he said but this happened to me in order that I Might learn not to rely on myself But on the God who raises the dead and So on him Paul writes We have set our hope That he has delivered and he will yet deliver you helping us by your prayers I sat there and I thought wait a minute Paul after years in ministry is telling me that he still had to learn Here's Paul saying I'd come to the end of myself and God had brought me to the place of despair on Purpose if you're discouraged today if you're despairing in ministry, it could be that this is God's moment of greatest blessing in your life Because Paul said God brought me to that moment so I could relearn Not to rely on myself, which tells me that if Paul hadn't gone through some of those experiences He would have his old flesh would have taken him right back trying to do God's work in his strength He said God taught me all over again not to rely on myself But on the God who does the impossible who does the extraordinary but not just any miracle the God who raises the dead what dead The dead Lord Jesus the one who raised him out of the dead who took him to his right hand Who made him Lord of heaven and earth and gave him all authority the God who did all of that He said it's in him I put my hope that he's gonna bring a deliverance in my life.

That is not unlike to the deliverance He brought to his own dear son why because I am a part of who he is and where he's headed and what he's doing and how he is blessed and That's why God will not fail to deliver me with him So I read that passage Wow, and I got down on my knees and in the quiet of that moment I felt and again you can weigh this it seemed as if I actually heard God speak this sentence into my heart and It's a sentence that I virtually visit every day of my life in the last two years including this morning and The sentence was this based on those verses in 2nd Corinthians 1 David. It seemed he said to me You're right you have no ministry and You will never have a ministry Unless I raise it up with my son from the dead day by day By day, and so I say to you here this morning I don't know if I've had any ministry here standing here in these few minutes to anyone in this room But if anything I've said has been a ministry in your life It wasn't anything about me it's because this morning when I climbed out of my bed God decided in his own sovereign grace to raise me out of the dead again and to raise any ministry He wants to have through me out of the dead again and to do it not only in his son But with his son and for his son and what he spoke to me out of 2nd Corinthians 1 I believe he would be willing to share with every single person in ministry in this room this morning It's the same word to every single one of us Therefore to have an encounter with the crisis of supremacy in our churches is To call our people back to a reconversion I said that earlier would to re evangelize our people to call them back not to the centrality of Christ We've done a lot of that. We have got to call them on to the supremacy of Christ What if when your people walked out of the service pastors and they shook your hands at the end of that Sunday morning? They didn't just say nice sermon pastor, but they said pastor.

I am stunned and I want to thank you You've given me keys I didn't have before to unlock even more Treasures of the rich storehouse of all that God has for me and his son and I want you to know pastor I'm walking out of this service this morning in sheer Amazement of who he is Do you think that could ever happen? Well when it does Sometimes we call that Revival

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