

# Christ, the Secret of God, the Image of God, and the Redeemer and Reconciler

by Lance Lambert

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*Christ is the secret of God, the image of the invisible God, and the redeemer and reconciler of all things.*

**Duration:** 1:24:59

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:8-10, Genesis 18:1-2, Genesis 32:30, Exodus 33:18-23, John 1:18, Colossians 1:15-20, Revelation 5:1-5

**Topics:** "Secret of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a vision from the book of Revelation where a scroll with seven seals represents the will and inheritance of God. The speaker recalls a personal experience of witnessing a plane stunt that captivated thousands of people and compares it to the awe-inspiring events that will occur when God fulfills His will. The vision reveals that the lion of Judah, who is Jesus, has overcome and is seen as a slain lamb taking the scroll from God's hand. This act of redemption not only applies to humanity but also to the entire natural creation. The speaker emphasizes that God's plans and actions are far from boring and that understanding His heart and mind is crucial for avoiding lukewarmness and apathy in our faith.

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## Transcript

You turn with me to the Colossian letter, end to the first chapter, first chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. I'm going to read from verse 12. Giving thanks unto the Father who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who delivered us out of the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things have been created through him and unto him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence.

For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross. Through him, I say,

were the things upon the earth or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past, alienated and enemies in your mind, in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unprovable before him.

I would like to add to that in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, in chapter 5. We haven't time to read both chapter 4 and 5. I will just read from verse 1 of chapter 5 of Revelation. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereon? And no one in the heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look thereon.

And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not. Behold, the lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a little lamb standing as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the little lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof. For thou was slain and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth. And I saw and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the lamb that hath been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And every created thing which is in the heavens and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory forever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

Just a word of prayer. Beloved Lord, we are here this evening in your presence, we're conscious that we are gathering together to you, Lord. And dear Lord, we want just very simply to recognize that, Lord, you have made a provision for us this evening for the speaking of your word, for the translating of your word and for the hearing of it.

Into that provision we stand by faith. Manifest your power in all our weakness, Lord, and grant that somehow this time will be a meeting with yourself, that that word of Christ will come to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. Oh, Lord, we need you.

We are living in tremendous days. We can become almost immunized to the turmoil and tumult and noise all around us. But, oh, Lord, we pray that you will by your spirit challenge us, wake us up, Lord, make us alert and alive to you.

By your spirit, oh, Lord, bring us into a new place with yourself, we pray. And we shall be careful, dear Lord, to give you all the praise and all the glory for answering this our prayer. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Amen. My responsibility in the theme of these days is the eternal purpose of God as seen in Christ, and particularly to do with the letter to the Colossians. And I said on the last occasion when I spoke that there is no eternal purpose apart from Christ.

God is not dealing in a whole number of things. He is dealing in and through a person. And this eternal purpose of His is centered in our Lord Jesus.

There is no salvation apart from Him. There is no new birth apart from Him. There is no Christian life apart from Him.

There is no growth apart from Him. There is no fullness apart from Him. There is no completion apart from Him.

There is no hope of glory apart from the Lord Jesus. There is no church without the Lord Jesus. There is no bride without the Lord Jesus.

God has given us everything of Himself in the Lord Jesus, and nothing outside of the Lord Jesus. We can build Christian organizations, institutions. We can call them churches.

We can do all a thousand and one things, and Christendom itself is a monument to this. But it is not necessarily the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit always begins with the Lord Jesus, and it always ends with the Lord Jesus.

The initiation is through Him. The introduction is through Him. The power to go on is in Him, and the completion is through Him.

And that is basically the message of the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians. I spoke last time about Christ as the heir of all things, the firstborn of all creation. The firstborn is always the heir, and really basically when it speaks of the firstborn of all creation, everything that has been created was created through the Lord Jesus and for the Lord Jesus.

And even more remarkable, the statement begins with, in Him all things were created. Now think about that. In Him were all things created.

It speaks about things in the heavens and things on the earth, things visible, things invisible. Everything was created in Him. It is amazing just to consider it for a moment.

Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all were created in Him. Everything that is created was created through Him and for Him. He is the heir of all things.

He is before all things. And in Him all things hold together. It's just simply tremendous when you see it like that.

Now, it then goes on to say, and he is the head of the church, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Something happened to that whole natural creation and something happened to man as he was originally created. But the Lord Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

He is the head of a new man, as we heard this morning. A new beginning. And the Lord Jesus is once again the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

It is wonderful when you begin to see it like this. And every child of God here in this place this evening, every one of you who has been born of the Spirit of God, you are in this new beginning. You are in this new man.

You are part of this new creation. Well, may the Lord help me, I feel extremely disjointed this evening. But I want to speak about the Lord Jesus this night in three ways.

The eternal purpose of God as seen in Him. I want to talk about first, Christ as the secret of God. God's secret.

And secondly, I want to speak about Christ as the image of the invisible God. And then I want to speak about the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer and Reconciler and the Inheritor. Now, I don't know whether we'll get there, but by the grace of God, we'll trust the Lord for all of this.

I just hope that I don't send you to sleep. Christ, the secret of God. This word mystery, you'll find it three or four times in the Colossian letter.

You'll find it in Colossians chapter two and verse two and three. That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid. Isn't that marvelous? These phrases, they are so tremendous, there's almost a universe in every phrase, spiritually a universe in every phrase.

Chapter one, verse twenty-five, whereof I was made a minister according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you all to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which has been hid for ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Or again, in Colossians chapter four and verse three, with all praying for us also that God may open unto us a door for the word to speak, the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds. This word mystery in the Greek, in the original, is simply secret.

It is not something fathomless, something beyond us, something absolutely, it is impossible for us to understand. It is a secret which is revealed to us. Paul borrowed this word mystery from something that was common in Hellenic or Greek culture.

There were mystery cults. You had to be a member of these cults. You had to be an initiate.

You had to be, as it were, someone who had been initiated into the cult, and then you had a right to understand the secrets. It was a strange thing, it was all over the Hellenic world, this thing, and the apostle took this, listen carefully to me, for the church, for the believer, for the redeemed. What he was saying is this.

If you are born of God, you have a divinely given right to understand the mysteries, the secrets. And there are a number of secrets we have. There is the mystery of Christ.

He sums up nearly everything in himself. There is the mystery of Israel, which for many people is a total secret. And I'm talking about Christian believers.

The mess over Israel is unbelievable. People have got the weirdest ideas about Israel. Either it's all finished and done with, or it's all going to only happen in the millennium, or whatever else.

But it's a secret, and only the Holy Spirit can reveal it. But it belongs, it is the right of every child of God to have this mystery. There is the mystery of lawlessness, which we are now beginning to witness ourselves.

All around us in human society, world society, we are seeing something. It's not gangsterism as such, it's not just terrorism, it is a living a life and producing a society that is outside of the revealed law of God. It is against what God has revealed as principles for living and for life.

But I mustn't stay with these things. I want to talk about God's secret, even Christ. He is God's secret.

I think, for instance, of the mystery of the incarnation. Can anyone understand the incarnation? That's something that the most intelligent person in the world cannot, by just intelligence, understand. You see, the secret of God is withheld from the wise and understanding, that is, the humanly wise and understanding, and revealed to babes.

Have you been born again? It's not that God is saying, are you stupid? Are you so stupid that you are dumb? You can only wail, you can't even articulate yet, then I can reveal things to you. I don't think it means that. He said to babes and sucklings, those who are so young, they're dependent.

Those who are so young, they haven't yet got concepts. To these, God reveals his secrets. To the wise, the Einsteins of the world, the secret of God is withheld.

From the Freuds of the world, the secrets of God are withheld. From all the great intelligences of the world, Darwin, and I don't know who else, I could think of Marx, Karl Marx, as one of them. He was certainly not unintelligent.

Or I think even of Mao Zedong with his thoughts. This is nonsense to them. It is not revealed.

They cannot understand it. They cannot pierce it. They cannot somehow come to an understanding.

What is it all about? But to the simplest child of God, born of the Holy Spirit, the incarnation is a reality. I don't believe you can trap this in a formula. We speak of it, the Trinity.

It's a word not found actually in the word. I believe in the Trinity. I like to speak of the triunity much more.

That's also not found in the word. The fact is found in the word, not the word itself. But all I know is this.

You cannot reduce the Lord Jesus to being a human being merely. He was a human being, but you cannot reduce him to that. How could it be that in him all things were created if he is a human being? How could it be that things visible and invisible, things in heaven and on earth, were created in him? How can all things hold together in him if he's a mere man? Here you have a mystery.

Here you have a secret. I don't think my little mind will ever comprehend it. Not in a million, million years in eternity, in the ages to come, will my little mind ever comprehend this secret.

But what I do know is that in Christ I meet God. In Timothy it speaks of the mystery of godliness. It is a secret.

How did God, how did God conceive the Lord Jesus? How did God become a baby, as helpless as a baby, in the arms of a human being? How is it possible that God was carried from place to place as a baby? Did he suspend his godhead? Was he purely man, only to become God later? That would be as nonsensical as many of the other theories. The fact is you have a mystery, you have a secret that human intelligence cannot comprehend but in when we are children of God, we have met God in the Lord Jesus. I could go on and on.

I don't take anything away from Dana or from Father Stephen and give them a little more problem. But I mean when I think of Romans chapter 16 and the last verse almost, it speaks of the mystery. This gospel according to the mystery.

In other words, I used to think every time I preached the gospel I am so stupid. Here I am preaching the gospel and I know very well that it is, to those who listen, it is stupidity. I'm talking about God coming into this world and being born of a woman and dying on the cross and these people in front of me look at me as much as to say, are you intelligent? You're trying to tell us something like this, like some Greek myth that the gods have come down to us.

But it is through the foolishness of preaching that God saves men and women. Isn't it so? You feel sometimes, well, we must try to be more clever and the more clever we try to be when we preach the gospel, the less people are saved. I remember very well, a very well-known academic coming in to the meeting at Halford House when we had four missionaries from the Congo.

These missionaries were the simplest people you've ever seen. One of them was black, three of them were white. The white were far more simple than the black brother.

I had never forgotten them singing count your blessings in some dialect of the Congo. And as one of them thumped on the piano, they went out of one key into another, to another, to another. And all they did was something like count your blessings in one time.

And I thought to myself, oh God, of all the meetings that this academic atheist should come in, he's come into this one. And I spent the whole time uptight in myself, thinking about this atheist, this academic and what he would think. What a loony lot in this place.

And afterwards, this man came to me with tears running down his face and said, this is the first time I have ever seen something real in Christianity. I remember, some of you will remember that wonderful brother, Erie Shaw, Kenneth Erie Shaw from Monroque, who came then to Halford House, who was a Cambridge Don and a classical Greek scholar. And you will remember how, or you won't, but I do, how he got saved.

He went with Brother Harrison when they were young undergraduates in Cambridge. He took him to a meeting because one of the very learned Christian ministers was going to preach. But he didn't preach.

He was ill. And the man who replaced him was W. P. Nicholson. Now that doesn't mean anything to you, but W. P. Nicholson was Irish.

And he was the funniest man. He was known all over Britain for being one of the funniest preachers. He couldn't help it.

He just couldn't help it. And Brother Harrison told me, he said, I sat next to Erie Shaw and I thought, oh my God, what have I done? He's damned to hell now. He'll never, ever come.

And Erie Shaw got saved that day, in the midst of all the laughter and the preaching of the gospel, he got saved. It is amazing, the mystery of the gospel. Yet the simplest child of God, for them, the gospel is the sweetest sound on earth.

It means life. It means salvation. And I could go on and on, all through all kinds of things, talking about this, but all I really wanted to say was this.

You and I can never, with this brain of ours, understand some of these things. But in our spirit, we touch God in the Lord Jesus. We come into His salvation.

We experience what it is to be born again. We experience what it is to grow in the Lord. For as you received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so you walk in Him.

It's the same process. You saw Him, you responded in faith, you received Him. Now every further step on the Christian way, in your life, in your progress, in your growth, is when you see the Lord afresh and respond to Him in faith.

And then you find you've moved forward. It is, I think, so wonderful when you begin to see it like this, and then I think of this, of the church. I won't say too much on this because our brother's already dealing with it, but all I want to say is this.

What a mess we've made of the church. Because we have never seen it. It's a secret.

We consider the church to be something from the old covenant, which can be put together and set up with all its organization. But the church does have an organization, but it's a different kind of organization. The organization comes from within the life.

Do you understand? Just like your body has an organization, an incredible organization. Just at present, mine is breaking down. But normally, these bodies of ours have an incredible organization.

I always use the illustration. Your body says you're getting too warm, so you perspire. I didn't read a book that said, now perspire when you get too warm.

Something inside an inbuilt organization, so complex, so sensitive, so fine with its thermostatic control. When you get cool, you start to shiver. You generate warmth.

It's an inbuilt thermostatic control you have within your body. There's a thousand and one other things we can talk about. Your body is an incredible organization, so it is with the church.

When it is a living organism, born, that's why Stephen said, the church has to be born. It has to be born of God. And when the church is born of God, you have within it, and it's an organism, and within the organism, you have an organization which expands and contracts as it is necessary.

But when you put the whole thing together, then it becomes top-heavy. And then it becomes an institution. And then it kills the spiritual life that is within it.

It's a secret. Christ in you. Christ in me.

I'm all for, I personally use the American Standard Version of 1901. Isn't that strange, for me, to use an American Standard Version instead of the English Revised? But actually, the American Standard Version is better than the English Revised. I must say that straight away.

But I'm talking about years ago. I'm talking about 1881, the English Revised, 1901, the Standard Version. I'm not against modern versions at all.

But I must say that one of the sadnesses of modern versions is that you cannot tell in English when you is plural or when it is personal, individual. In other words, in the old version, if it was, what is this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in thee, the hope of joy. It didn't say that.

It says Christ in you, because that's the plural. That is Christ in you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you. Do you understand? Christ in each one of us.

That is the hope of glory. Because the glory of God is far too much for one single human being to contain or express. It needs all the saints together.

And then again, think of Colossians chapter 2 and verse 19. Holding fast the head. Oh, my goodness me.

Here's a secret. This is part of the secret. Christ dwelling in us.

Isn't that? How can Christ dwell in us? Now, isn't that a good question? Our Lord Jesus, in the body that he was here on this earth, in which he will return, is at the right hand of the majesty on high. How can he dwell in you and in me unless it is by the Spirit? It is a secret that can only be revealed. It doesn't make sense when you think.

So you have a whole kind of Christianity which is personal and purely objective. He is at the right hand of God, and that is my Savior and my Redeemer. But he doesn't speak to me.

I do have the book, and I must study the book. But it never comes alive to me. That's getting mystical.

But if Christ dwells in you, he's bound to speak to you. What a strange thing if the Lord Jesus is in you and you never hear him making real his word to you, applying his word to you, if he is in you and with the eye of your heart you never see him. I mean, that would be very odd and very strange.

Yet, to the child of God, this is a divine right. In Colossians 2 and verse 19, it speaks of problems they had in the church in Colossae. And then it says, and not holding fast the head, I better read it so that I don't misquote it, and not holding fast the head from whom all the body being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands increases with the increase of God.

You know, it is very interesting that whenever trouble hits an assembly or a fellowship, the first thing we all try to do is to hold one another. And then we get into trouble. In fact, when error comes, and we all try to hold one another, slowly we all move off center.

The only way you discover the body is by holding fast the head. So when you hold fast the head, you discover the body. And the body increases with the increase of God.

Now, I say that this is some secret, this mystery. Don't you think so? I think so. The only certain hope of glory you have is Christ in you.

So the more there is of him in you, the more glory there will be. So simple. The less of Christ in you, and the more of you, the less glory.

Very simple, isn't it? And then I think of this universe. Perhaps we see it most clearly here, when we take the whole universe. Don't despise the universe.

The Bible, from the first chapters of Genesis to the last of Revelation, emphasizes the fact that God is the maker of heaven and earth and all that is within them. Don't think for a moment God is going to throw away this universe. Even when the whole thing is renewed through fire, there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

And the most amazing thing about this, something that scientists have not been able to understand, is that this whole universe was created through the Lord Jesus and for him. But even more, in him it was created. What does that mean? When it says, and all things hold together in him, as if he is the basic energy of the whole.

Einstein never discovered that. The greatest scientific minds hadn't discovered that. And yet, this is a secret that the simplest child of God can understand, by the Spirit of God, the mystery of God.

In other words, when we speak of Christ as God's secret, he is the key that unlocks everything. Did you get it? He is the key that unlocks everything. He unlocks the secrets of the universe.

He unlocks the purpose in the universe. He unlocks the destiny of the universe. He unlocks the fall of man, God's original purpose for man, and then his fall.

It is the key that unlocks the redemption and salvation of man. And it is the key that unlocks the eventual glorifying of man in Christ in union with him. He's the key to everything.

He's the key to the church, the key to the growth of the church, the key to the completion of the church. He is the key to the bride and everything to do with the bride. He is the key.

Well, I don't know whether that's too much for most of you this evening, but that's my first point. The eternal purpose of God as seen in Christ, he is God's. There's no other way for you to understand the universe, the earth, everything within it, man, God's original purpose, the redemption of man, and the reconciling of all things into him. I love that phrase.

In the Greek, it's just as he has reconciled all things into him. Amazing. Well, I must leave it or we'll never go on.

Now I would like to speak for a little while about Christ, the image of the invisible God. You have it in verse 15 of chapter 1, Christ who is the image of the invisible God. And then if you will turn to Hebrews and to chapter 1, I will read from verse 2 and 3. Hath at the end of these days, God hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds, who being the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

This word image of the invisible God, first of all, you must understand, I know, I think all of you will know this, that God is by his very nature invisible. It's spoken of a whole number of times in the word. God is, let

me try to put it in a few words to try and get it over to you.

God dwells in unapproachable light. That means that you and I, if we came near to him, would be shriveled up, like electrocuted. There's no way you and I could approach God in ourselves.

And then there's something else. God is unknowable. There's no way your finite little mind and my finite little mind, I don't know about you, but I think of myself when it comes to God as having a brain the size of a pea.

How in the world am I to understand God? God has no beginning and no end. Every single person I know has a beginning and an end. You all have beginnings and you'll all have ends.

I mean, it's part of life, isn't it? Everything has a beginning and everything has an end. It is impossible for us to comprehend someone who never had a beginning, who always was there. Well, you say, where did he come from? Well, that's the point.

He was always there. You see, you just can't fathom it. You can't take it in.

Well, you say, no, just wait, just wait. He must have had a beginning somewhere. Somewhere.

He came from somewhere. No, no, no, no. He was always there.

No beginning, no end. Infinite. Uncreated.

Living in unapproachable light. For us, human beings, even, listen to me, even if we were not sinners, even if we were not fallen, unintelligible, unknowable, incomprehensible, our little minds could not take this in. Have I got it over? Do you want me to give you all number of scriptures that speak of this? No man has seen God at any time.

John chapter 1, verse 18. But it's not just there. It's all through the Word.

Then, just wait. If you know your Bibles, one of you is bound to say, well, who did Adam talk with in the garden? I mean, if he's unapproachable, unintelligible, incomprehensible, entirely beyond us, who walked in the garden? And when he spoke, Adam, whilst when he sinned, he hid himself. Before that, he didn't hide himself.

Who spoke to Adam and Eve? Who spoke to Abraham, when he saw, when the God of glory appeared to our father, Abraham? Who, who wrestled with Jacob, when he said, I have seen the face of God. Now, mark it, the face of God, and I have lived. Who spoke to Moses, when he said, Lord, show me your glory.

And the Lord said, I will hide you in the cleft of the rock. You shall see me from the back, but not the front. Who was it? Who did Isaiah see, high and lifted up, whose train filled the temple? If no man has seen God at any time, if God dwells in light unapproachable, who is this one, long before the birth of the Lord Jesus, that so many of the saints in the old covenant actually saw.

So remarkable is it, with Abraham on one occasion, that the Lord came with two angels, and Sarah cooked them a meal. Interestingly, it wasn't a kosher meal either. She put milk and meat together.

Do you remember? And the Lord said about this time, your wife will surely bear a son. And Sarah was in the tent, preparing the meal behind the tent flap, and she laughed. And the Lord said, why did you laugh?

And immediately Sarah said, I didn't laugh.

I always find that one of the most humorous stories in the Bible, because it's all through a closed tent flap. The Lord saying, you laughed Sarah, why did you laugh? And she didn't open the thing and say, I'm so sorry. She just said, I didn't laugh.

And then the Lord said, through the tent flap, when your son is born, you will call him laughter. Yitzhak, laughter. Who was it? Now, the amazing thing is that the Lord Jesus is called the image of the invisible God.

And the word, it's hard for us to understand, because the word image is not a nice word for us. We think immediately of idols or icons or something like that immediately. But the word is really impress or imprint.

I have a ring here. If I took off this ring, it has a family thing in it, and I were to impress it in wax. There is an imprint.

Now, that may not again help you very much. But what it means is this, that the Lord Jesus is the exact impress of the substance of God. I know it sounds almost impossible, almost blasphemous to say, but that's what the writer in the Hebrew letter says, the very, the exact imprint or impress of the substance of God.

In other words, when you see the Lord Jesus for the first time, you can know the unknowable. You can understand the incomprehensible. For the first time, you see God, if I may so put it, with a human face.

You see someone that you can relate to, and suddenly you begin to understand who God is, the Lord Jesus, the image of the invisible God. Do I make any sense at all to you tonight, or are you having a little snooze back there? The impress of God's substance, what an amazing, what an amazing statement, huh? Let me take you a step further, if I may. The Lord Jesus is called by the Apostle John, the Word.

In the beginning, he said, was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And then listen, he says, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

This Word, translated Word, Logos, it really has the whole idea of something that you, is verbalized, articulated. Let me put it another way, if I think, but don't speak, you have no idea what's going on in there. If I feel, but don't express anything, you have no idea what's going on in there.

Jesus is the mind and the heart of God revealed. For the first time, you understand what is in the mind of God, because it is verbalized. If you understand, I know this isn't good, I'm trying to make it as simple as possible.

It is the thought of God in expression. His thought expressed in a way that you and I can understand. It is his heart expressed in a way that you and I can understand the Word of God.

It's wonderful to think about it, to consider it. I find this so amazing, the eternal purpose of God as seen in Christ. How could you ever, ever, not in a million years of study, understand who God is and what he is like outside or apart from the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is the impress of God, the imprint of God. He is the Word. He is the mind and the heart of God expressed in flesh and blood.

Believe it or believe it not, it is in flesh and blood that this mind and heart of God is revealed to us. Now, we see what God is like. We see him touch a leper.

From the moment leprosy came to that man, not a soul touched him. Not his mother, not his father, not his wife, not his children, nobody touched him till Jesus touched him. That's what God is like.

We see the bringing a woman taken in the very act of adultery. Something so, in one sense, so disgusting that religious people would even do it. But they took her in the very act of adultery.

I have no doubt they waited. They knew what was going on with her and whoever it was. They waited, and then they dragged her off and out, flung her into the presence of Jesus and said, the law says this woman should be stoned.

We are witnesses. We've taken her in the very act of adultery. And Jesus stooped.

This is the very word that God had given, the very commandments that God had made. He stooped and with his finger he doodled in the sand. One of the questions I want to ask when I get to glory is what did he write in the sand? We don't know, but he doodled in the sand and then he said, whoever is without sin, let him cast the first stone.

And they went out, beginning with the eldest, because he had the most sin. And in the end, Jesus turned to her and said, is there no one here to condemn you? And she said, no one. And he said, go and sin no more.

That's what God is like. When Jesus came to the wedding at Cana of Galilee, his mother came to him in a panic. I don't know if they were relatives or close friends, why his mother was so involved, but she was.

And like all mothers, she said to him, do you know the wine's running out? I don't know what happened to them, very poor foresight. And Jesus just said to the men, go and take from those great jars. It's all right.

And he turned the water into wine. That's exactly what Jesus does with every human life that's sinful. It is corruptible.

Terrible tendency to go wrong all the time. Jesus turns it into wine. I know some people get very upset about this.

They feel the Lord Jesus would have done much better if he had turned wine into water. I've heard it many, many times. I always remember the lady who came up to some preacher, minister who had mentioned this, preached on it and said, I don't think you should have preached on this, because this is leading people astray.

And he said, but my dear sister, Jesus did turn the water into wine. Well, she said, I would have thought more of him if he hadn't. That's the problem with prejudice and bigotry.

Why did Jesus turn water into wine? Because that's exactly what he does with you and me. He turns the corruptible into the incorruptible, mortal into the immortal. He takes your life and my life so given to sin and so given to going off the rails.

And he puts within it a power that is abnormal, almost unnatural to keep us on the path. And when we do go, he brings us back again and again. It's wonderful, isn't it? This is what God is like.

Now you begin to understand who God is. For the first time you see into the heart of God. For the first time you see into the mind of God.

When Jesus said, I am the true vine and my father is the husbandman. That was the hardest thing of all. It was bad enough when he said, I am the bread of life.

He that eateth me shall live forever. That must have been unbelievable for people. He was saying, what? Did I hear him say right there? Did he say, I am the bread of life and he that eateth me shall live forever? Yes, he did.

He did say that. I never did. What is he talking about? A little easier to say I'm the way, the truth, and the life.

To say I'm the door of the sheep. This is understandable. But when he came to, I am the true vine and my father is the husbandman.

That must have been the most difficult of all the things he said. Everybody knew the vine was a picture of the covenant people of God. What did he mean when he said, I am the covenant people of God? That's impossible.

But he explained it. Abide in me and I in you. As the branches cannot bear fruit unless they abide in the vine, neither can you except you abide in me.

Jesus didn't say, I'm the trunk and you are the branch. He said, I am the vine. That is everything.

And somehow you are in me. You have become part, as it were, of what I am. This is the church again.

It's amazing. So wonderful. Now you begin to understand what is in the mind of God.

You see? Well, I must pass on because we could go spend the whole of night till tomorrow morning talking about the Lord Jesus as the image of the invisible God. Invisible is invisible. That means you can't see it.

You can't with these eyes take it in. But Jesus is the impress, the imprint of the invisible God. What was invisible is made visible in the Lord Jesus.

It comes through the prism of his life, of his character, of his nature. And now we begin to see the heart and the mind of God. Is it any wonder that the writer to the Hebrews spoke of the Lord Jesus being the effulgence of glory? What an old-fashioned word that is.

I know some of the modern versions have tried to make it a little more intelligible. What is effulgence? The old authorized King James version said the bright shining. It just means the radiant outshining.

Jesus is the radiant outshining of the glory of God. That's why John put it like this. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

Glory as of the only begotten of the Father. If you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 6, we read this word here. It is God who said light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

No human being could understand the glory of God, but in the face of Jesus Christ we get the light of the knowledge, the illumination of the knowledge. In the face of Jesus Christ, is it any wonder, and now I'm

straying again into Dana's therapy, but is it any wonder that the Apostle says, as we behold in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same likeness from glory to glory. You see, to me it's something amazing, this Lord Jesus being the image of the invisible God, being the Word of God, being the effulgence of God's glory, the radiant outshining of the glory of God.

You've been called to that. Is it any wonder that Paul says by the Spirit of God, Christ in you, the hope, the certain hope, not vague hope, the certain hope of glory, is Christ in you? Can you say by the grace of God, Christ is in me, he dwells in me? If you can, his being in you is the certain hope of glory. Well, I must finish, otherwise always the clock beats us, only just a few minutes.

What I find very wonderful is also finally just to consider Christ as the Redeemer and Reconciler. It's all very well to speak of the whole universe being created in him and holding together in him, and that he was before all things, and that everything created was created through him and for him, but look what's happened. Man has fallen, and when man fell, something went through the whole universe.

The amazing thing about the eternal purpose of God is this, listen carefully, he doesn't produce a church to be an end in itself. The church with the Lord Jesus is to go into the ages to come into the fulfillment of all God's purpose, but we don't know what that purpose is. We honestly don't know.

We get asked all kinds of questions. Will we dress in clothes? What kind of clothes will we wear? Shall we eat? Especially the Chinese always ask me that. Shall we eat in the ages to come? Will we recognize one another in the ages to come? And a thousand and one other questions you get asked about, what will it be like? What will the relationship be in the ages to come between husband and wife since marriage is only till death part us? Is there any special relationship? What happened? We don't know.

We don't know. We can surmise certain things. The Lord Jesus ate after he had that resurrection body, he ate something, but does it tell us very much, honestly? I think only this, and God had a purpose for this universe.

That purpose was arrested and paralyzed by the fall of man. When sin entered this world, the whole purpose of God for the natural creation was paralyzed, put on a shelf almost. It was subjected to an endless cycle of futility and corruption that has gone on and on and on, and upon which a whole number of oriental religions are based.

The wheel, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, they're all built on this thing that the world is a wheel that goes on, everything that was will be, and so we come back and back and back. But that's before. That wasn't what God originally intended.

In Revelation chapter 21, Jesus says from the throne, I make all things new, and then he says I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and he speaks of something altogether new. He's going to dwell in the midst forever, not visit, not bless, not use, but dwell forever, and we see the glory of God finally coming, as the prophet said, the knowledge of the glory of God covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. The wonderful thing is it's all centered in the Lord Jesus.

Jesus, he is the redeemer, the one who by the payment of a ransom wins back to the original owner what has been lost, not just you and me, but the whole natural creation. Oh, think, I think to myself, you mean to tell me that God in creating this universe has exhausted everything he could do? My goodness me, if only we could understand God, if we could only understand his heart and his mind, he's waited all these years

to get on with the job. We don't know what the job is.

We don't know whether he'll create new universes and new planets or whatever he'll do, but I can tell you one thing, it will not be boring. I know the Lord, I have now known the Lord for over 50 years, and I have never found the Lord boring, not in a sense. I feel so sorry for young people when they tell me I find it all so boring.

Yes, yes, you find God's people boring. Some of God's people are terribly boring, because we get lukewarm and apathetic and affluent, and we sit on our behinds and do nothing, save couch potatoes. You know, I mean, it's a sad thing, and it's no wonder sometimes people get bored and say, oh, it's so boring, and then I think of heaven, and oh, no excitement, nothing.

We're going to sing forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. We don't even know whether we'll eat. That would at least be an interval in between the singing.

We get together for a meal, a banquet or two, and then we go back to singing again. Well, now, worship is wonderful when you're really lost in worship. It's almost as if time stops and you move into eternity, but God, there's no doubt we'll worship the Lord.

There's no doubt we shall be lost in wonder, love and praise. There's no doubt just the rehearsing of the whole old story, that's what I want to hear, the whole story from the beginning rehearsed in the halls of glory, as to how it all happened, who was involved, how people prayed, the names we never heard about which are known to God, all these ones. Brother Stephen said the book of Acts is an open-ended book.

Well, I want to hear the rest, not from some church historian. I want to hear it from the Lord himself, telling the whole story from the beginning and calling upon the different witnesses. Now, come and tell your little part of the story over here, and they won't be able to exaggerate because he's there.

They'll just tell it exactly as it is. Won't it be wonderful? Just think, exciting. I tell you, I think it'd be exciting, but there's far more than that.

We don't even know what the Lord's going to do. All he wanted was a marriage. He wanted a marriage.

We're talking in Sunday school language, the pictures, as it were, that God wanted a people for his Son, to be one with his Son, and to have been trained to reign with him. But what are they going to reign over? What are they going to do? What is it in the ages to come? All we know is that these wonderful things are stored up beyond our imagination by our heavenly Father and by our Savior and heavenly Bridegroom. It can't be boring.

It can't be boring. If human beings can put on fireworks, which get very exciting on July the 4th, and other times, can you imagine what the Lord will do? I mean, those things will be nothing compared with what the Lord will do. My dear friends, that's why I read that marvelous chapter in Revelation, because really it is Colossians 1 all over again, only in a vision form.

You see, when you will remember the vision, I think, John saw a throne, and round the throne a rainbow, like an emerald. And then he saw four living ones, representing, I believe, as Brother Sparks always said, and I believe he is right, the natural creation, and the 24 elders representing the government of the redeemed from both covenants. And then he heard, he saw in the hand of the one who sat on the throne, he didn't apparently see the person on the throne, but he saw this hand, and he saw in this hand a scroll

with seven seals.

Now he knew exactly what that was. That was a testament, a will, an inheritance. He knew.

It was all to do with the inheritance, heirship, if you like. And a voice of a mighty angel said, who is worthy to take this testament, this scroll, this will, and open the seals? The four living ones, who were in perpetual motion, stopped. The four, the 24 elders, stood.

Not a soul. I've been once or twice in times when thousands of people, for some reason or another, have suddenly stopped. I remember being, many years ago when I was young, in a big air show, and one of my mother's closest friends was the chief de Havilland's test pilot.

I remember his plane going right round, there were 35,000 people watching. And it came, and as it came across, to this day I've got it imprinted on my mind, it stopped. And suddenly it turned upwards, and it went back.

And the two engines slowly came out, all like in slow motion. You could not hear a sound. Not a sound.

It was as if everything was frozen. And it was only when it fell to the ground and you saw the pilots, two pilots, fall out of it, and then you saw the two engines coming toward us, that suddenly people began to run. Absolute silence.

And John burst into tears, because he understood it was all to do with the will of God for the universe and for man being fulfilled. And then an elder came, one of the 24, interesting, I don't know which one it was, but he came and he said, don't weep John, look, the lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome. And John looked for this lion, and instead he saw a lamb, a little lamb, in the throne.

And to his amazement, this little lamb, as it had been slain. And he saw this, as it had been slain, little lamb, take the scroll out of the hands of him who sat upon the throne. And of course, he began to break the seals.

And then the whole great assembly burst into praise. What a song! They were worthy as the lamb who died, they sang, who purchased us from every tongue and kindred and nation to be a kingdom and to priests unto our God. That taking of, in the vision, that taking of that scroll and breaking the seals leads right through the whole book of Revelation, through serpents and dragons and martyrdom and beasts and false prophets and a thousand and one other things, great world empires and all the rest of it, till you come to the end.

And you have the city of God coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God. It was the lamb. Nobody else could have done it.

Not Abraham, not Isaac, not Jacob, not Moses, not Elijah, not Isaiah, nobody, only the Lord Jesus. He took the scroll. And in that moment, the purpose of God for the universe was secure.

It was in the hands of the only one who could fulfill that will of God. Dear brothers, sisters, isn't it worth belonging to the Lord Jesus? Stephen will talk about the church and Dana talk about the believer and the eternal purpose, but as that touches both the church and the believer, but all I want you to see is this. There would be no church and no believer but for that little lamb.

What an incredible picture it is, a lion. A lion is a magnificent creature. Personally, I like the tiger even better.

But you see, you never had tigers in Israel. You only had lions. We had many lions.

They died out in the 16th century. But what a magnificent creature the lion is. The male lion with its great crest and the way it stands there, shakes its head, throws back its head, roars.

The lion of the tribe of Judah. I love it. I love everything about it.

The Lord Jesus is no little spineless person. He's a lion. Taken on the powers of darkness, taken on Satan, taken on the whole fallen world, taken on a demon infested world and beaten them all in his death on the cross.

That's a lion. But it was a little lamb. Nothing more different.

Lambs, sheep, don't roar. My cottage, I've got them all around us. They drive me mad.

The bells ringing all the time. But there's no roar with the lion. They're just little creatures.

They're sweet creatures. I've never understood sheep. They put their head in the bottom of the one in front and then they all walk to get the down.

It is extraordinary. I could tell you many, many things about sheep. This wasn't even a sheep, a little lamb.

I listen to the little lambs. They cry all the time. It's no great lion roar.

But there's something so amazing here. Jesus is both the lion and the lamb. He is both the king and the sacrifice in one.

He takes the testament, the will of God, and says, I will break the seals. And you and I are in the breaking of the seals. Thank God it's in the hands of one who is absolutely worthy, worthy to be enthroned.

This is your savior. This is your redeemer. This is your heavenly bridegroom.

This is the Lord Jesus. Shall we pray?

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