

Unveiled Christ

by Stephen Olford

The sermon unveils the glory of Jesus Christ, highlighting His person, power, and purpose, emphasizing the importance of recognizing Him as the sovereign Lord.

Duration: 33:05

Scripture: Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 1:9-11

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that there is nothing to fear because believers are empowered by the touch of God's hand. The speaker highlights that after being conquered and comforted, believers are commissioned to publish the good news just like John was. The sermon emphasizes that despite the challenges in the world, believers have a contribution to make in their generation, as the purposes of God will ultimately be fulfilled by the glorified Lord. The sermon concludes by discussing the unveiling of the glory of Jesus Christ, focusing on his person, power, and purpose as revealed in the book of Revelation.

Transcript

Thank you, General. Well now, I suppose that if most of us were back away at our own churches this afternoon, we would be leading Bible classes or Sunday school classes, or perhaps doing some private study in our own homes. And I thought it would be fitting on this Sunday afternoon to have a Bible reading together from the passage from which the General read a few moments ago.

I refer to the book of the Revelation, chapter one, commencing at verse nine. Revelation, chapter one and verse nine. Those of you who are familiar with the pattern of teaching, which I believe is rightly planned for a convention of this kind, will remember that our theme today is the sovereignty of God, or the picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, high and lifted up, the glory of God's Christ.

And it's with that thought in mind that I want to speak this afternoon, by way of Bible reading, on what I'm going to call the unveiled Christ. The unveiled Christ. With your Bibles then open, and I hope you have them ready, we'll just have a brief word of prayer and then right into the message.

Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that thou would stand among us afresh in thy risen power, and grant that we shall see no one save Jesus amongst us, hear no voice but his, feel no touch but his touch of power, eclipsed thy servant in the glory of his outshining. May he have his pre-eminence in our thinking and in our study, here this afternoon, for his dear name's sake. Amen.

Samuel Chadwick once openly declared that he couldn't understand the book of the Revelation. But having made that public declaration, statement, he was so convicted about it that he determined to go back to his home and read this book through once a day for a whole month. At the conclusion, this is what he said, I have found this book to be a precious treasure house of instruction and a sanctuary of worship.

And young people especially in this convention meeting this afternoon, I do want to commend this book to you. With all its symbolism and with all its difficult passages, it's a precious book, one from which I have derived personally. A great blessing, and I continue to read it and study it.

You see, Samuel Chadwick discovered what so few have discovered, that this book of Revelation is really the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its key phrase is the first five words of the book. Look at them.

The revelation, or unveiling, of Jesus Christ. Twenty-six times throughout this book we have his sacrificial title, the Lamb, the Lamb. And it's not without significance that we're confronted right at the very beginning in this first chapter with one of the most glowing and vivid pictures of our glorified Lord.

I want us to consider this afternoon the unveiling, first of all, of the glory of his person and then the unveiling of the glory of his power and, in conclusion, the unveiling of the glory of his purpose. First of all, then, the glory of his person. And will you look with me at verse thirteen onwards? In the midst of the seven candlesticks, or better, lampstands, one likened to the Son of Man.

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven after his resurrection, he took humanity with him into heaven. So we have a man, a man at the throne of the universe, one who understands us perfectly. There is one God and one mediator between God and man, and the man, Christ Jesus.

And as he was singing just now, those wounds yet visible above are in beauty glorified. And I'm glad we have a man at the throne of the universe, especially in view of the verses which now follow. For the vision in this chapter is not so much the vision of the prophet, priest, and king, though these offices are in the background.

The vision is rather of the judge, the judge who is going to unhold the destiny of men and women. He wears the seamless garment right down to the foot. And you'll notice that the seamless garment is not held in at the waist, signifying the service of the priest.

It's held in at the bosom, the breasts, indicating his magisterial office as judge, as judge of his people, as judge of his assembly. Then follows a sevenfold picture of him. And I want us to go right through these verses together and gather what to my mind is a glorious picture of a glorious Lord.

First, we notice his head. We read in verse fourteen, his head and his hands were white as wool. This, my dear friends, is suggestive of the maturity of his judgment, the maturity of his judgment.

When I want mature advice, I usually seek out somebody who is graying, or at least gone white, through the experience of suffering in obedience. And this is just what we have in our wonderful Savior and friend. He is the Ancient of Days, whose years fail not.

And in him I have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And I never need guidance and direction and wisdom in my life and find him to fail. The maturity of his judgment.

We pass on to the next thought, his eyes. Verse fourteen, his eyes were as a flame of fire, suggestive of the purity of his judgment. The prophet says of him, Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

And the writer to the heathen declares, All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. And as he stands amongst the lampstands, there is nothing hidden from him. No outward expression of evangelicalism or orthodoxy can substitute for holiness of life within the Christian experience and within the Church of Jesus Christ.

His eyes search us to the very depths. And there isn't a fellow, there isn't a girl, there isn't a man or woman in this great audience here this afternoon who is hidden to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. His eyes burn as a flame of fire.

We can't be shamans. We can't be hollow and empty and unreal. For he sees us through and through.

He's the judge in his assembly. His feet, his feet like fine brass, as if they'd burned in a furnace, suggestive of the severity of his judgment. In the Roman epistle, the apostle Paul tells us that there is the goodness of God and the severity of God.

Brass or copper was the metal out of which the great altar was made. And it speaks of strength or of severity of judgment. And the reference here, undoubtedly, is to that picture which we find a little later in the book of the Revelation, chapter 19, in verse 15, where the Lord Jesus is depicted as treading out the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

Now, you Bible students here, you know how often that phrase has been used of the Savior in connection with his Calvary experience, but you know that's not sound exegesis. The context clearly teaches here that this is a reference to his judgment. The day when he will crush to nothingness all evil before he ushers in his kingdom of peace wherein dwelleth righteousness.

His eyes as a flame of fire pierce right down into the depths of our being. And my beloved friend here this afternoon, there is nothing you can hide from your husband or wife or parents or children or dear friends that you can hide from his eyes. And since he is of holier eyes than to behold sin or to look upon iniquity, he must judge sin.

Don't be surprised as we develop the teaching in this connection if you don't feel something of the pressure or the tread of those feet that are as brass. Burning in a furnace, his voice, his voice is as the sound of many waters. Verse fifteen.

Suggestive of the authority of his judgment, the grandeur, majesty and power of his authority is as the sound of a thousand cataracts. How the thunder of a mighty waterfall fills and thrills our soul. Such is the authority of his voice.

And as it sounds forth across the passions of human lives. Isn't it wonderful to know that only his voice, his voice of authority can say, be muzzled, peace, be still. Once again I want to remind you, listening friend here, that the voice that comes over the microphone night by night in this or the other tent is not just the voice of a so-called Kazakh speaker.

If he's in touch with the throne at all, if he knows anything of the fullness of the Holy Spirit in his life, if he knows the anointing of the Holy Ghost upon his life, if he speaks the truth of God, he speaks with the voice

of authority. And you can't resist it. You can't resist it.

For his voice is the voice of many waters. You can't drown it by reasoning. You can't drown it by rationalizing it or philosophizing it.

You must bend to the voice of authority, for his voice is absolute. His hand. He had in his right hand seven stars.

Verse sixteen. Suggestive of the sovereignty, the sovereignty of his judgment. He holds not only the whole world in his hand, he holds the stars in his hand.

And in verse twenty the stars are interpreted for us as being the angels of the seven churches. Now right down through the centuries there's always been a difference of opinion as to who these ministering angels are. I submit to you this afternoon that they represent the ministerial gifts given to the church.

And it is important to notice that they're held in the right hand of our glorified Lord. He's the sovereign one from whom all authority and sovereignty within his church are derived. The only ordination we can recognize is the ordination of the pierced hand.

He wields the only undisputed sovereignty within the whole church. My beloved friend, you haven't a Bible class, you haven't a Sunday school class, you haven't a preaching circuit responsibility, you haven't a mission field post, but watch, it's in his control. You're there because he sends you, you stay there because he keeps you.

If you're there because he hasn't sent you, then you're out of his hand and you're in the place of peril. But how wonderful to know that he who walks amongst the lampstands of his church in this age of ours today has in his control the ministry and the gifts and the offices and the service, all under his control. How wonderful to come to the place where having seen this glorious picture of our Lord, we can say with sole of Tarsus, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Keep me in thy hand.

That's the only place of safety and blessing. If his hand speaks of the sovereignty of his judgment, look again at verse 16. His mouth, out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, suggestive of the accuracy of his judgment.

Listen to the words written by the Hebrew epistle. The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. In Old Testament times, when animals were brought to the altar, it was the high priest who slew them, and no veterinary surgeon of modern days could be more accurate than he.

His experienced eye could see at once whether the sacrifice was pure, healthy and well nurtured. When he drew his knife to slay the victim, he never missed the mark, even to the dividing asunder of bone and marrow. His operation was always done with absolute accuracy.

Such was the judgment of God upon the sacrifice on account of sin. And the writer to the Hebrew picks up that very picture in this chapter four in verse twelve. When that word comes from the voice of our risen, glorified Lord in authority, it strikes, but it always strikes the mark with absolute accuracy.

When the sword pierces and harks, my beloved friend, and divides between your soul and spirit this week, don't blame the preacher, don't blame the sermon. Remember that our glorious Lord who judges in the assembly of his people is the one from whom that sword proceeds. And he's never amiss in the accuracy of his judgment.

But I'm so glad that isn't the whole picture. Six aspects we've looked at, but look at the seventh. Your heart will be warmed.

Here it is, his face. Verse sixteen, his face. His countenance was of the sun shining in its strength, suggestive of the charity of his judgment.

Can you think of anything more warm and charitable and welcoming than the sun in a cloudless sky? My beloved friend, in all the maturity, purity, severity, authority, sovereignty, and accuracy of the judgment of our Lord, there is charity. There is charity. Love radiates from his face.

Though he's judged in his church, yet he's judged from whose face the light shines with a radiance and winsomeness and love. We're reminded in this same book that in the new Jerusalem there'll be no need of light. Why? For the Lamb will be the light of it.

And so we've seen something of the glory of his person. And I wonder what you think of it. I must confess that for me, as I've knelt and prayed over this message afresh today, it is a vision which leads me first in silent wonder and then leads me irresistibly to submissive worship and obedience.

The picture of our glorious Lord unveiled in his person. But look again. With the unveiling of his person, there is also the unveiling of his glorious power.

And there are three arresting statements in this passage concerning our Lord, to which I want to draw your attention very briefly. One in verse eleven, I am Alpha and Omega. Verse eighteen, I am alive forevermore.

Verse eighteen again, I have the keys of hell and death. Take those three for a moment and consider the glory of his power. Here we have, first of all, the power of his sufficiency.

I am the Alpha and Omega. He is the A and Z of everything. Can you think of any word in any language which isn't comprehended in the alphabet of that language? Indeed, there is nothing which exists in the entire universe which cannot be gathered up and named from the alphabet.

And Jesus, in all his sufficiency and completeness of power, is our Alpha and Omega. There is no demand made upon your life, my beloved friend, which isn't a demand upon the life of Christ in you. And if you can claim here this afternoon, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, then this wonderful, glorified Lord we've seen is the one who dwells within us by his Spirit, and he's my Alpha and Omega.

He's my A and he's my Z. There is no demand upon my life which isn't a demand upon his life in me. Such is the sufficiency of his power. No wonder the Apostle Paul could say, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Or as J.B. Phillips puts it, I can do, I am ready for anything through the power of Christ who dwells within me. The power of his sufficiency, yes, and the power of his supremacy, I am alive forevermore. He is the one who was dead and is now alive in the power of an endless life.

He's conquered every conceivable power in hell, in earth, and in heaven. He stands upon resurrection ground and he looks into the faces of his disciples and he says, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go, lo, I am with you always.

And to know the authority and supremacy of that power, my beloved friend, whether on the mission field or whether in that church situation or whether in the business house or the counting house, is to know an authority that can put to rout the forces of evil. Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. There is the power of his sovereignty.

I have the keys of hell and death. Having dealt a mortal blow to Satan, he plucked from the girdle of the devil the very keys which he holds in his hand forevermore. They are the keys of death, for it is overcome him that hath the power of death, that is the devil.

The keys of the unseen world. For in his sovereignty and power he has the destiny of men and women under his supreme control and nobody can wrest those keys from him. The glory of his power.

What a wonderful saviour. Hallelujah for such a saviour. Do you know him? Do you know him intimately? Do you know him personally? Do you know him vitally? But look once again as we lift the veil.

The glory of his person, the glory of his power, the glory of his purpose. Write these things which thou hast seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter, said the Spirit to the enraptured John. Verse 19.

My dear friend, if you want to study the book of the Revelation, then that text gives you the key to the whole book and in fact sums the whole book up. But in a sentence and for our purpose here this afternoon, let's put it this way. The glory of the purpose of our Lord for your life and my life and for the Church is, first of all, final victory.

Final victory. And I'm taking now a sentence out of chapter 11 and verse 15. The seventh angel sounded and there were great voices in heaven saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and forever.

The ultimate purpose of God is final victory. And I can't share, I can't share, I won't share the pessimism of some of my brethren in the ministry. Why? Because he's on the throne and God's purposes cannot be thwarted and he's moving on to ultimate victory.

And I don't care what's happening in the Church today. I can't help what's happening in the world today. All I know is this, that I've got a contribution to make in my generation that upon the throne of the universe is this glorified Lord who will bring to fruition the purposes of God and nothing can ever thwart that.

Final victory held in his hand. And with that final victory there is final felicity and happiness. For I take chapter 22 and verses from 1 to 5 just for a dip into the meaning of his purpose.

He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out to the throne of God and of the Lamb. And they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no nightmare and they shall reign forever and ever.

That, my dear friend, is the climax of the purpose of God. Whatever joy and thrill we may have in fellowship down here and during this week at Keswick is but a meagre foretaste of what is yet to be. That

final felicity and happiness and climax of all his glorious purposes for his own children.

Now, my friend, with all the glory of his person and his power and purpose brought before him by the Spirit of God there were three things that happened to this enraptured John the Apostle. With these three things we conclude today our Bible reading. Here is the first one.

We read, he was conquered. Verse 17, I fell at his feet as dead. I want to say quite plainly and simply here this afternoon that no one can see the glory of Jesus Christ without dying completely to everything of self and the world.

Nobody can catch a glimpse of the glory of which the Reverend John Cage was speaking of here at the prayer meeting this morning. No one can catch a glimpse of that glory and be satisfied with anything less. Once Moses saw that bush aflame, there was lit in his heart a longing and a hunger for the glory of God that nothing else would ever satisfy.

You remember how he prayed later on, Show me thy glory! Show me thy glory! God said to him, I let my goodness pass before you. And he hid him in the cleft of the rock. My dear friend, when you see the glory of God, when the Spirit of God flashes upon your inner soul, the radiance of the glory of Jesus Christ, your self-life and everything else that has occupied you up until now will be at rags, filthy rags.

There will be only one place to put them, and that is at the foot of the cross, or better made to the cross. The language will be, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. Jesus, Lord and Master, love divine hath conquered.

I will henceforth answer yes to all thy will. Freed from Satan's bondage, I am thine forever. Henceforth all thy purposes in me fulfill.

He was conquered. He was conquered by that vision. But he is a gracious Lord.

We read in the next place that he was comforted. He was comforted, verse 17, and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, for I am the first and the last. My beloved friends here this afternoon, the whole idea in comfort is encouragement and enablement.

So there was the word, first of all, to encourage. Fear not, I am the first and the last. There is nothing to fear.

And then there was the hand of enablement. The touch of that hand empowered him to stand to his feet to face what was to follow. And what was to follow? Here it is.

He was conquered, that's true. He was comforted, that's true. But he was commissioned.

And he stood upon his feet, strengthened by that divine touch for the commissioning. Listen to the words of the commissioning. Write the things which thou hast seen.

Having seen and heard the person and power and purpose of his glorified Lord, John was commissioned to publish the good news. And it's come down to us to this very hour here in this tent this afternoon. His commission is my commission.

His commission is your commission. And if we truly have seen and heard the Lord today, if this afternoon in this simple Bible reading the Spirit of God has brought the glories and excellencies and virtues of our

bachelor's glorified Lord breaking through unto your soul, you can never be the same again. There's only one passion.

There's only one burden. There's only one concern, and that is to share this wonderful Christ with a world that's blinded to him. And let me remind you that what the world needs is Jesus, just a glimpse of him.

And so let us go forth to make him known by life and lip, without shame, without shame, for he's our judge and he knows us through and through, without shrinking, for he's our enabling Lord. Indeed, young people, as we often sing, let this ever be our prayer as we leave our rooms morning by morning, Jesus, my Savior, in my behavior help me to be like thee, harmless and holy, loving and lonely, patient and pure like thee. Or if you prefer, let it be seen that with thee I have been, Jesus, my Lord and my Savior.

Let it be known I am truly thine own by all my speech and behavior. Let us pray.

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