

# Burning Fire of the Spirit - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the spiritual principles in the book of Revelation and the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church towards redemption and perfection.*

**Duration:** 55:28

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 1:12-16, Revelation 3:17, Revelation 4:5

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the description of the throne of God in Revelation 4:5. They emphasize that their aim is to provide practical teachings that lead to real-life application. The speaker then discusses the various characteristics of the Son of Man, as described in Revelation, and how they relate to the examination and judgment of the churches. The main point of the message is to highlight what the Lord is truly looking for in his people, emphasizing that certain things that the churches thought were important were not actually what the Lord desired.

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## Transcript

Will you read with me from the first chapter of the book of the Revelation, book of the Revelation, chapter 1. Read the first clause and then pass to verse 4. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace to you and peace from him which is and which was and which is to come and from the seven spirits which are before his throne and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Unto him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins in his blood. He made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and father. To him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

Amen. Behold he cometh with clouds, every eye shall see him, they which pierce him and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty. I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos. For the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying, Thou seest, write in a book, send it to the seven churches, unto Ephesus and unto Smyrna and unto Pergamum

and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis and unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea. I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, to girt about the breasts with a golden girdle.

His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto varnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace. And his voice as the voice of many waters. He had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.

And his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. He laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one.

I was dead. Behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Chapter 4 and verse 5. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. Before we proceed with the message itself, dear friends, may I repeat something that has so often been said in times like this, as to this ministry. Firstly, it has always been our aim, and does still remain our aim, to see that the messages given lead to very practical issues.

But those who hear them are rarely faced with those practical issues. That is, we are not at all concerned with or interested in just teaching as an end in itself. If it cannot lead to something quite definite, then we realize that we are wasting our time.

While that is true, and is always our aim, of course no teacher can ever make actual in his hearers the things which he imparts, the intention of his ministry. He gives what he believes to be the message that God has given him, commits it to the Lord in much prayer. The rest is with the people and with the Lord.

We'll remember Dr. Campbell Morgan once saying with emphasis, God helped the preacher whose hearers do not fulfill his ministry. That's just what we feel about it. Now as to this message, you see, we come back to this book of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In keeping with what we have just said about the essential practical nature of ministry and of a message, we come to the book which I fear has resulted not in too much that is of practical value, for there is no book in the Bible, perhaps, that has resulted in more confusion than this book. This book has produced a considerable number of conflicting schools of interpretation. To mention them by name would be only to open the door to the confusion.

It's not my intention to do so. But this is quite certain that God never intended any part of his word to lead to confusion. Confusion is not a characteristic of the Lord.

He is not the God of confusion. Therefore, it becomes necessary that we reduce the whole matter to some quite simple conclusions or conclusions. I think the first three chapters of this book, as forming a distinct section, are an excellent example of how the whole book can and should be reduced to a simple conclusion.

You are at liberty to leave the place names, if you like. You can forget Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamon and the rest as names and as places. You can indeed leave quite a lot of the symbolism.

Not all of it, because some of it is so obvious. But what you cannot understand, you can leave. And you can resolve this section in this way.

Firstly, we are here in these first three chapters in the presence of timeless spiritual principles. They are truly being applied to particular conditions, situations, and places. But there is something more than the place and the time and the particular situation.

There is a spiritual factor that is governing everything. And we are in the presence of those factors which are more than local, more than geographical, more than of a time setting. They are age-long.

And more than that, they are eternal. So that the very first thing that we have to recognize and grasp as we come to this book and to this section as an example, is this. Here we are being presented with something that is in the mind of God which touches this situation or all these situations which are set forth here.

And what we have to do is to get hold of what that is in the mind of God. It is one thing. May have many aspects, but it is one thing.

And to get hold of that one thing is the key both to this section and to the whole book. I'll not mention for the moment what it is, we are coming to that presently. Secondly, we are in the presence of one of those Christic points.

It may be the last. When the Lord calls to account for all that he has given. Is that clear? That is of course quite clear in this section.

It governs all the rest of the book, but keep to this section. The Lord had given much to the church and to the churches. They had received a lot through his apostles, through his servants.

They had a great wealth of spiritual inheritance. And when the Lord has done anything like that at any time in history, it is as though at given points he comes back and says now what about it? What about it? I have given, I have revealed, I have made known, I have entreated, I have implored, I have besought, I have exalted, I have warned. Now the time has come when some reckoning has to be made and an answer given.

You will see that the Lord has done that more than once in history. But here we are in the of such an occasion. I say it may be the last because this book does stand in relation to the end, doesn't it? The Lord's coming.

But here is a principle as well as a time application of the principle and it is we are here in the presence of a crisis. The nature of which is just this. The Lord is saying how do you measure up to all that I have given you? How do you stand in the light of the whole deposit that has been made with you? And this crisis is a very serious one.

It is critical indeed as you notice because the issue is the alternative between continuance or discontinuance. The vessel, the lampstand remaining or being removed. That's the crisis.

It's that of the whole future. Thirdly we are here made aware that the Lord's desire is to bless. His is a positive attitude not a negative.

While he has to put his finger upon the things that are lacking, the things with which he does not agree, you notice that he invariably ends his quest with to him that overcometh will I grant. Will I grant the Lord's desire in every case, in every situation, however bad it is, his desire is to bless. He is on positive lines.

There may be rebuke, there may be exposure and uncovering, there may be warning, there may be exhortation, but there's a promise suspended before everybody. A wonderful promise. Everybody is faced ultimately not necessarily with doom but with the good pleasure of the Lord.

His desire is to bless. He may condemn but his condemnation is to clear the way for blessing. He may have to judge, he may have to break, but that is to provide the ground for blessing.

He may warn with a solemn voice, but his warnings are coupled with his desire that these people should come into something more of his grace, of his goodness. And you cannot read these promises to overcomers without being tremendously impressed. It seems that the greatest delinquents, those who have failed most are offered the highest.

So it was with Laodicea, you cannot get any further than to sit with him in his throne and that's the offer to Laodicea. All the things that are judgeable are found there. But the highest reward is offered.

It is from the very depth to the very height. That's his thought for his people. Finally and supremely we are confronted with that for which the Lord is looking.

That's going to be the point on which the message turns. That for which the Lord is looking and it has to be said without which he cannot justify the continuance of a vessel of testimony. That is dear friends what we have got to focus upon.

What is it that the Lord is looking for? Now many things were thought to be by these churches, were thought to be the things that the Lord was looking for and they were not. They were not. Turned out that they were just not the things that the Lord was looking for.

He had his own object before him and he could not be satisfied with anything less or other as an alternative to that. Now that is the summary of this first section in the first three books. I hope you have been able to grasp it that I have simplified the interpretation that you can see even if only in the last thing that I have said the supreme thing that.

That only, that essentially for which the Lord is looking when he has given so much to his people. From that point we come to the method. The method employed by the Lord, by the Holy Spirit for reaching the end upon which the heart of God is set.

The method employed. That is of course comprehensively and inclusively seen in the presentation of the Lord Jesus which we have in chapter one. That is always God's method, is always the method of the Holy Spirit to bring Christ in his supreme fullness into view.

No one meditating upon that vision of the Son of Man given in that chapter could doubt to have there a presentation of the fullness of Christ. How full. I confess to you dear friends that in meditating upon this for many days, a long time now, I have found my greatest difficulty, my greatest difficulty to be to comprehend the fullness of every fragment.

I am not exaggerating when I say that into almost every fragment of this presentation of Jesus Christ you could crowd a mess of what is in the Bible. What to leave out is the difficulty. Here the Holy Spirit's method comprehensively is to bring back Christ not partially but in fullness.

Christ in fullness. And as you look at it you will find that it is a seven fold characterization of the risen and governing Son of Man. It is into those seven aspects that so much is crowded.

Everything is crowded. We may just mention what they are. The garment with which he is clothed down to the foot.

The gavel of gold about his breast. Head and the hair white. The eyes as a flame of fire.

The feet as varnished grass. The voice as the sound of many waters. And the sword sharp and two edged proceeding out of his mouth.

Who can comprehend all that? Seven fold characterization of the Son of Man. That is presented. Projected.

Before in this case the churches. If you like the church in its fullness represented. And this seven fold characterization is the basis of the examination which is going to take place.

And of the judgment which is going to be declared. It is according to what is here at every point that everything is going to be tested and determined. These are the features that constitute his quest.

You ask what is it the Lord is after? Is seeking? The answer is that which corresponds to these features of Christ. You can understand what they signify then you know exactly what he is after. This presentation of Christ is first of all personal.

And then you find that it becomes corporate. He is holding the churches in his hand. He is moving to and fro amongst them.

He and they are in a sense identical. And what he is really seeking is that what is true of himself shall be true of his church in every place, in every location, in every expression. Now in chapter one verse four you have this phrase.

The seven spirits which are before his throne. And if you pass over to chapter four at verse five you have another reference to those seven spirits. But in a particular form.

There were the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. Which are the seven spirits of God. Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.

Of course seven spirits is another symbolic way of speaking of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit we may put it, and we have authority for so doing, in a sevenfold expression. A sevenfold expression of the Holy Spirit.

It is one spirit. Mentioned here as in the symbolism of seven spirits before the throne. The throne we know and understand is the symbol of government, of authority.

Lamps of fire. The throne functioning as lamps of fire by the Holy Spirit. We know what lamps of fire are originally.

The word is torches. We know what that means. The function of a lamp of fire is first to reveal, then to test, and then to determine values.

The throne is in action here in that way. Quite clearly to reveal, to test, and to determine. I have more to say about that presently.

This is, come back to chapter one, the expression of Christ by the Holy Spirit in a sevenfold characterization. They are before the throne. It is the throne that is here in action.

Let us keep that in mind. It is the throne that has come into action here by the Holy Spirit in relation to the fullness of Christ in all the main features of his character. Picture is quite simple, even through the intricate symbolism.

Throne is the seat of government. The ministry of the Spirit is the sevenfold what the Spirit said to the church. Notice that, seven times, what the Spirit said.

And what the Spirit said, he is saying as from or before the throne of government. And what he is saying is that this one who is brought into view is this, and is that, and is that. Seven major characteristics of Christ.

Christ is that. The throne of government stands by that. The Spirit challenges concerning that, what the Spirit said.

Seven times over, it's that. Seven lamps of fire which are the seven spirits of God. It is what that throne is looking for requires and demand.

So that the ministry relates to those divine features which are the features of the Son of Man. Can't hurry on much as we want to. We are brought up short by that title.

At once, one light unto the Son of Man. The margin corrects it, because the same writer, the same writer wrote in the gospel, chapter 151, and there you can't mistake the fact that this is the Son of Man. Jesus saying to Nathanael, thereafter you shall see the heavens open, the angels of God ascending and descending upon, it cannot be a Son of Man, the Son of Man.

And so it is here, this one presented. Does it not impress you dear friends? I hope I'm not wearying you with too much detail. Does it not impress you when you read this description of the Lord? Look at this description in all its details.

And then hear what he says about himself. Does it not impress you that this one is described as the Son of Man? Why you would expect of all places in the bible, here you should find the Son of God. It is the Son of God.

But that is not what he is called here, in this particular connection. Son, the Son of Man. What does that mean? It's a title which comprises, firstly, it's a title which comprises, firstly, God's original first thought as to this special creation called Man.

God said, let us make Man. He was doing a new thing. He was embarking upon a particular kind of creature, a special creation.

And in so doing, he had a thought bound up with that. Or large thoughts bound up with Mankind. Son of Man embraces that thought of God originally, Man.

It embraces, in the case of the Lord Jesus, God's loss as to his purpose, desire, thought, in Man. God's loss of a man departed from the way of God. God lost in that man what he had intended.

And in this Son of Man, that is taken up, God's loss. That of which God has been deprived by Man's sin, and willfulness, and Satan's interference. But this term also embodies God's redemption of Man.

Son of Man, that's related to God's redemption of Man, and therefore of that which he had lost. Further, Son of Man includes the divine perfection of the Man which God made. Getting very near to the vision now, aren't we? And finally, Son of Man, as relating to the Lord Jesus, is God's model for all his further activities where Man is concerned.

There you have the five-fold component of this title, Son of Man. Now you know what the Lord is after. What the churches and the church are intended to be in the mind of God.

What God is seeking, what the Son of Man is seeking, what the Holy Spirit in his seven-fold activity is seeking, is one thing. Correspondence to the Son of Man. That that Son of Man shall be found repeated in character.

In all men, church is chosen for that. Seven lamps of fire, they reveal how far that is true and how far that is not true. They test everything on that ground.

Does this answer to what Christ is like? What the Son of Man is like? And having found the answer, judges accordingly, that is the quest. To illumine and search. To discriminate between what is Christ and what is not Christ.

To purge, if it may be, from all that is not Christ and to establish what is. That's the sum of these three chapters. Lamp one.

Seven lamps burning before the throne. Lamp one. The first aspect of Christ with which we are met.

The ground of the Holy Spirit's quest and activity. What is it? A garment down to the foot. A garment down to the foot.

This is not the priestly robe and this is not the kingly robe. This is just a garment. It is not described at all.

It is simply stated that he was clothed and with a garment down to the foot. He was clothed and fully clothed. Fully clothed.

You remember that the very first effect of man's sin was the consciousness of nakedness. It was sin that brought about that consciousness. We are told precisely.

Immediately man had sinned. They knew that they were naked. Realization of it.

Their consciousness was changed because their nature was changed and the changed nature was first marked by a sense of shame. You notice that the very first work, genuine work of the Holy Spirit toward redemption and recovery is to produce a sense of shame. For many supposed professed conversions lack that or lack it sufficiently.

But any true genuine work of the Holy Spirit begins there. To cover our face. Consciousness.

Our undone-ness. What the Bible means by nakedness in the sight of God. Look here in chapter 3, this book, at verse 17.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and have gotten riches and have need of nothing. And knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Few more terrible judgments could be passed upon anybody than that.

You have no sense of need or of shame. You have no consciousness of how you really stand before the eyes that are aflame afar. You think you're alright.

You think you're covered. I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by far that thou mayest become rich and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest. This is symbolic language relating to spiritual truth.

God immediately proceeded to make clothing for man to cover him, to put away from his own sight. Man said, may you come to the Son of Man, the last Adam. Here he is clothed down to the foot.

He, in other words, has a fine, keen sense and sensibility of what is fitting to the presence of God. Don't you feel that searching? In so many instances and matters in these churches, that was just the trouble. They had not that due sense, that fine sense of what is suitable to God, what is right for God, what becomes God.

They're putting all sorts of things forward, but no, no, this one thing was so often missing. Now this is capable of very wide and manifold application. See, clothes, clothes are usually the expression of the person who wears them.

Untidy clothes, unbrushed clothes, careless clothing betrays the person. Or we could go over that whole round, couldn't we? What a searching word for the whole question of clothing or not clothing in these days, before God. But here is the symbolism, it's spiritual, it's spiritual.

It is what we are in ourselves before God as producing shame, self-abasement, but then thank God what the Son of Man has secured and provided for us in a garment of righteousness that we can stand in the presence of God. I said to you a little while ago, friends, that you could crowd into every one of these fragments a mass of the Bible into that one word clothed. You crowd the whole of the letter to the Romans and again the letter to the Galatians and much more.

It is this question of the righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God. I counsel thee to buy of me white, white raiment. And the white raiment is the righteous acts of the Savior.

It is the righteousness of God given to us in Christ the Son of Man. You see what a large realm that opens up. How do we stand before God? Are we projecting ourselves before God? Are we standing as before the Lord amongst his people or alone or anywhere in this world and obtruding our natural life in any form upon the eyes and the consciousness of those around? What a lot of that there is, even in our religion and even in our feigned spirituality, making the impression of meekness or whatnot.

And behind it, it's the impression of ourselves. Oh no, we are right at the beginning and the foundation of everything here. What is our standing before God? What is our standing before our brethren? Our standing at all? It can only be what we are in Christ.

It must never be anything other than that. What we are in Christ. What Christ has been made unto us as wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Clothed, put he on the Lord Jesus. He hath put off the old man, the figure there quite clearly in the original language is of a garment being put off, one garment being put off and another being put on. You put off that garment of Adam, the old man, and you put on Christ another garment, another clothing.

The first challenge of the Holy Spirit is this. How much of you, of us, is appearing what we are? Making an impression, oh God save us from wanting to make an impression. From being outstanding and singular and different in order to draw attention or to register something that brings us into view the Lord have mercy on.

It is Christ, our clothing, the only fitness, seemliness for the presence of God. And believe me dear friends, the ultimate question of all these searchings is the presence of God, standing in the presence of God. That you may stand before the presence of God.

Can't do that in our natural condition because that is nakedness and shame. Know how much the New Testament says about this matter when we appear before him and when he appears whether we shall be naked before him in that day? Well, again, it's a symbolic word but oh how searching it is. But how blessed it is, how it will drive us again to our most blessed of all blessings, the clothing of a righteousness that is not our own, but the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

But I say again, it deals with all, all of this, every aspect of self coming into the picture, every aspect of ourselves coming into the spirit as a lamp of fire, exposes, searches, determines. And that with this one, I close at this point for the time being with this. The Lord lead us to seek more and more that we may have this fine sense of what is proper to God.

You see what that means in the natural. Come into the presence of a person of honor. I remember reading the seer of Chelsea Carlisle going on a visit to Queen Victoria.

And being what he was, the philosopher and the recluse, he never bothered about how he dressed. And he appeared most shabbily at the palace. Most shabbily.

And what a scandal it was to Queen Victoria. She never got over it. All his philosophy and all his genius and everything else went for nothing.

Man hadn't any sense of what is fitting for the presence of a queen. Well, that's only sidelight. You know, it works like that in the natural.

But how much more for the Lord? When we come together, what is fitting for the presence of the Lord? And we would always be in his presence. May the spirit check us up continually on that which is not suitable to abiding in the presence of the Lord. Say, now that's not consistent with the Lord.

You'll have to change your clothes a bit in this matter. See what I mean? Well, is that practical? Is that just teaching again? A subject, a theme? I say, beloved, very little could be more searching than that. The Lord lead us to this same quest as is in his own heart.

For on this matter, remember, he puts on the one side the highest value, on the other side the most scathing denunciation. Listen to him with the Pharisees. Their fine clothes, their garments, their pretences,

their outward adornment, he saw right through to their nakedness.

Oh, how scathing to hypocrisy, pretense. I say, no, that won't do. But here is a blessing for those who will seek continually, cultivate that sense of what really belongs to the Lord, the honour, the glory.

The Old Testament fragment comes back to us with new forms. Worship the Lord in holy array.

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