

The Victory of Jesus Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Book of Revelation reveals Jesus Christ as the Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the dead, and Ruler of the kings of the earth, who has absolute supremacy and dominion over the world.

Scripture: Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Victory in Christ", "Lordship of Jesus"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the victory of Jesus Christ as the ultimate resolution to the long-standing question of who governs the universe. He explains that the revelation of Jesus Christ is central to understanding the book of Revelation, which addresses the conflict between Christ and earthly powers, particularly the Roman emperors who demanded worship. Sparks highlights that Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has established His authority over death and Hades, making Him the Ruler of all. He encourages believers to recognize the significance of Christ's lordship in their lives, especially in the face of tribulation and suffering. Ultimately, the message is one of hope, affirming that Jesus' victory assures believers of their place in His eternal kingdom.

Transcript

Quite a large number of you were not with us this morning. The word then was foundational to what the Lord has given me for this conference. I will do my best, without wearying those who were present with a repetition, to help you all into the message.

We are occupied with revelation of Jesus Christ. Or the word can be changed and retain the same meaning - the unveiling of Jesus Christ. I think it is impossible to take up this book which has that as its title and begin to read without very early in our reading becoming aware that a tremendous piece of business is on hand. The impression that very quickly begins to take hold of us is: we're in the settling of some big issue. We are faced with some tremendous and momentous decision. Everything here says: now a long outstanding question is going to be answered. A long standing issue is going to be settled. The time has come when what has been a matter of controversy and conflict for a very long time, is going to be headed up and settled. Surely that is what ought to be the impression as we begin to read.

Anybody who can take up this book and begin at the first chapter and even in the first words and just read it as something printed without becoming aware that there is something tremendous involved and in view, surely has missed the whole meaning and value of the book.

And that is just what the book is all about. It is the settling of this controversy which has gone on through the ages, this answering of the question, this concluding of the whole matter and writing forever and ever: "FINISHED" to one phase. And that matter, that issue, that controversy, that question, is just "Who is going to govern this universe throughout the ages of the ages?" Who is going to govern? That has been a matter of contention through thousands of years from the creation. All history has circled round THAT matter, THAT question. Now, says this book, we're going to settle it once and for all. And when you have really got hold of that, you've got the key to the book and to everything that is in it. It will interpret all that is in this book, much, as we said this morning, that is difficult to understand in itself, almost bewildering in its detail and the manner and form of its presentation.

But I shall go on to say, well what does that mean? Well, in some way that relates to this ultimate and consummate issue: the government of this universe as God intended when He created it. The issue is: NOW is come the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ - the climax of history. Well now, that helps you right into where we were this morning with a great deal of detail and we proceed.

From that and with that, we're going to look into the part of the first chapter we read earlier and work right to this very matter we have mentioned. Notice it begins with the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's grand! That's fine! All that is coming subsequently, the warfare and the welfare of kingdoms and nations; all the manifold movements, comes back to this. Alright, the revelation of Jesus Christ. That stands over it all, is the answer of it all; the unveiling of Jesus Christ. How HE stands related to EVERYTHING in this universe. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The same word is here as Paul used in his prayer in the letter to the Ephesians "That He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ". Spirit of revelation; unveiling in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's what it is. And this unveiling or revelation is here said to have been something that God GAVE to His Son. It needs a good deal, perhaps of imagination and quiet thought, to grasp the significance of these statements, but here in the language of men it is said God let His Son see HIS place in relation to all the consummatory movements and activities of the ages. Where HE stands as the ages are brought to their culmination and their consummation. Father God gives to His Son to see His place in it all; "which He showed or gave to His Son".

And then it goes on, "to show to His bondservants". That is general, not particular, not just to apostles, not to some special people, just to His bondservants. You and I come into that category, the bondservants or bondslaves of Jesus Christ. This unveiling is given by God to the Son, through an angel, to John, for us. The point is that any true servant of God ought to be acquainted with all that appertains to the purpose of God in Christ Jesus and He sent and signified it to His bondservant John.

Notice the title John gives to himself; he does not say "John the apostle of Jesus Christ". He calls himself "the bondservant" and then in verse 9 he says "I, John, your brother". John always speaks on the Family basis and level, brings himself into very close relationship with those to whom he writes, as a member of the Family. He brings them right in, not on official ground, but on the ground of Life. We're in this with John, that is what John is saying, we're in this with him on the very basis of family life: "I, John, your brother". Brother!

"In the isle that's called Patmos, for the testimony of Jesus", he says, "for the testimony of Jesus and being there I am your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus". Be patient as we work on through these details: on the isle Patmos... for the testimony of Jesus... partaker with you in the tribulation, kingdom and patience in Jesus. Now the question at once arises, which gets us very near to the heart of the whole matter: Why was John in Patmos? Because, he says, for the testimony

of Jesus. But that is not very enlightening. The question is a bigger one than that, why was John in Patmos? And being in Patmos in the tribulation that is in Jesus. And the answer to that question is in this whole book. It takes the whole book really, to answer that question.

And may I say here by way of parenthesis, incidentally, the answer may account for the tremendous battle that has raged over this book. You know, or you may not know, the very great battle raged over the admission of this book into the canon of the Scriptures. Oh, what a battle to have it bound up in the divine library! To allow it to be included in the Bible! A real big battle raged over that, but at last the battle was won for its inclusion. I take that as having some significance. But then what a battle over the book since it's been in! We pointed out this morning the many diverse schools of interpretation, the controversy that has raged over this book through the centuries, the confusion that has been brought about by the way in which the book has been handled, all the divisions that have sprung up and there is no end to them. Only about a year or so, a year, eighteen months ago; a new division sprang up in America over this very book, a fresh split on its interpretation and they're fighting, they're at one another's throats about this quite minor point of interpretation; but there it is. What does it mean? I say, that there is an explanation to all that, it is not just hap.

The answer to our question, I think, may be the explanation of that long, drawn-out controversy around this book. The answer, then, as to why was John in Patmos is in the first place found in that which obtained in the world at that time in the form of emperor worship. You, some of you, will know that the ruling Caesars claimed to be divine and therefore they claimed human worship. Somebody has said they posed as gods and did the work of the devil. That's significant. Julius Caesar was worshiped. Octavianus was called Augustus - "Reverenced". Caligula demanded that his image should be put up in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem; he was killed before he was able to do it. That carries some significance. And this emperor under whom we believe John was exiled to Patmos, Domitian, was called - actually called - 'our lord and god'. They usurped the place of God. They claimed the worship of man; they took to themselves deity.

So, the issue is clear-cut. There is no mistaking it, it is Caesar or Christ! For THE apostolic proclamation everywhere was without any mistaking it: Jesus Christ is Lord! That's the testimony of Jesus for which John was sent to Patmos. The issue is clear-cut, quite clear-cut. It's a very significant thing that the Jews were dealt with comparatively leniently. Were the Christians? They did suffer under Rome but they suffered nothing like the sufferings of the Christians. I say that's significant! THEY had crucified the Lord of glory therefore the devil is not so much concerned about them, but THESE people, THESE people who will have no compromise on this matter; the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ as God! As the Son of God! There can be no reconciling Caesar and Christ, Christ and Caesar. That's the issue. And, dear friends, when John says 'in the tribulation in Christ' the implication is that the tribulation or the suffering is ALWAYS proportionate to the place that you give the Lord Jesus. If you give Him a second or a third place, well you will have a comparatively easy time. Put Him where God has put Him, make Him Lord of all and of everything, and you're in for tribulation. In for tribulation! So it was with John.

All this surely is gathered up into the very titles; Jesus Christ the faithful Witness, Firstborn of the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the earth. Say that in the face of the Caesars; the Ruler of the kings of the earth! You're in for it! You're in for it when you realize what store the Caesars set by their divine prerogative. The Ruler of the kings of the earth - Jesus! Jesus Christ! You and I, dear friends, never realize the implication of that title, you know that "Christ" is only the Greek for the Hebrew "Messiah", the whole conception both of the Hebrew and the Greek Messiah and Christ, was His Kingship; Anointed! Anointed. The Kristus! The

Anointed of God and that Anointed meant nothing less than absolute Rulership, Supremacy. To speak that Name: Jesus the Anointed, Jesus the Messiah, is at once to throw a challenge at that whole empire of the Caesars. No wonder the apostle said no man can call Jesus Christ but by the Holy Ghost. They knew it. You wondered what that means because you can all call Jesus Christ, glibly, easily and say Jesus is Christ. Ah, but go into that realm, live in THAT day and it would be the most terrifying thing to publicly say "Jesus of Nazareth is the Anointed of God to be the Ruler of the kings of the earth". You need the Holy Ghost to make you bold enough to say that.

And dear friends, that is not so remote, in the past. There are many, many today who are afraid so to speak of Him and afraid for their lives. You can go into fanatical Mohammedan countries and proclaim Jesus the Christ, the Son of God; you do it with your life in your hand. You need the Holy Ghost for that boldness. So you see, here we are right at the heart of this thing. Jesus Christ... the Faithful and True Witness. That word 'Witness' as you probably know, is the same word as 'martyr', the Faithful Martyr. Alright, John's in good company. Jesus Christ the Faithful Martyr, the Faithful and True Witness. It cost Him His life to stand for His Kingdom. It cost Him His life at the hands of every devil-inspired instrument that knew the issue. Knew the issue! The issue of that Man was nothing less than the dominion of this world and the devil knew it. So He would say 'you are of your father the devil, he was a murderer from the beginning'. They murdered the Prince of life on this one matter - His place in the eternal counsels of God as Lord, as King, Firstborn from the dead, I'll have something more to say about that shortly, Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Well, these titles just set forth the stages of His progress to the throne:-

Faithful Martyr; that was the Way of the Cross.

Firstborn from the dead; the Way of the divine Vindication.

Ruler of the kings of the earth; that is the glorious End of the Cross and the Resurrection.

Ruler! Ruler of the kings of the earth! Satan, who knew Him, yes Satan's agents and [powers] betrayed their knowledge of Him when they, the demons, said "I know Thee Whom Thou art, the holy One of God, I know Thee!" Satan knew Him and knew His divine destiny and so he took Him up into a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world, the glory thereof and said "All this will I give Thee if Thou wilt..." now here we are, back on this thing, "worship me"! Worship, where worship is to be. You see, here is the Caesars again. Worship me! Jesus refused that dominion at the hand of Satan and took it by the Cross! And here, this book sees Him in possession of it: the Ruler of the kings of the earth! If you have any question about that by reason of the seeming power of world rulers in our time; power, world systems, how they do afflict the Church and the saints... read the book of the Acts again and you will see in that book the Ruler of the kings of the earth wielding His power and Herod learned something of that and others.

We know now, we know now that this wonderful book of the revelation of Jesus Christ has been fulfilled in a very large degree. The very empire that denied Him His place and Lordship and set itself to destroy every trace of His Kingship, has gone to dust. Daniel has a very, very real place here, hasn't he? Remember then the vision and the fourth kingdom of iron which undoubtedly was the Roman empire, and in the days when that kingdom has been reached from Babylon onward, in the days when the Roman empire has come into being, the vision goes on and I think we've lost a good deal of the real point of that vision - the God of heaven, the God of heaven produces a Kingdom. "I saw, I saw in a vision, a stone, cut without hands". Oh, I would like to dwell upon that for half an hour - a stone cut without hands! And it

smote the image and the image, by that smiting, crumbled to dust but the stone itself rolled on and as it rolled, gathering momentum, it gathered volume until it filled the whole earth! We're [really] IN that, we're in that! This empire which set itself up against the Lord and His Christ was smitten by that Stone cut without hands, and it has crumbled to dust, there's no doubt about it, it's literally fulfilled! But the Stone... the Stone of this other Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, has gone on gathering momentum and gathering volume as it has gone on, reaching to all the nations. Well, that perhaps doesn't stir you very much, it's so commonplace, you know it. But here we are, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, He came to that position through the suffering of death.

For the time being, as I have said, I am leaving out that section which gives us the revelation of Jesus Christ in person; we come to that again perhaps. Here let us note that we are now introduced at this point to two things - firstly His victory. His victory. And that can be summed up in two or three verses: "I am the First and the Last, the Living One, I became dead, behold I am alive forevermore and have the keys of death and of Hades". That's His victory. The other is His character which we shall reserve for another time. Just a few minutes on this: His victory. "I am the First and the Last". That's victory in a statement by itself! And it's important to recognize the significance, the particular significance, of the use of that title in relation to this book.

Here we are at the end, at the consummation of everything. Now we have come to the culmination of all things and He declares "I was the beginning of all things". Go back to Paul's letter to the Colossians for that - in Him, through Him, unto Him, were all things created, things in heaven, things in earth, He was before all things. "I am the First. As I was at the beginning and as I was the Beginning of all things, I am the Last, I am the End". The end corresponds to the beginning, it is no other, it's no other than Himself, "I am the First and the Last". That's a TREMENDOUS statement! "I am simply gathering up all things into My hands, all things in the end are with Me. Everything has got to answer to Me at the end". In all things He has the pre-eminence. "I am the Living One, I became dead". Now, I want to say a word about that way of expressing in a minute. But first that again, "I am the Living one, I became dead. I am alive unto the ages of the ages". There was a reason why the Lord Jesus said that.

You know, Nero, under whom the apostle Paul suffered and was executed, was regarded as perhaps the most ferocious of all the Caesars up to his time. But there was one who exceeded him and that was the one under whom John suffered, this Caesar Domitian. Do you know what was said about him? This Caesar was said to be Nero come back from the dead. He was called Nero, "Nero Survived", raised from the dead, back again to carry on his nefarious work. John is suffering under the one who is said to have died and risen again. Jesus takes hold of that, right hold of that and says "I AM THE LIVING ONE, I became dead, I AM ALIVE, not for a human tenure but unto the ages of the ages". So we can accumulate all this data, material, on this one great issue: the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus.

"I am the Living One, I became dead". Note, that's really the correct translation, and He did not say "I was killed, I was murdered, I was slain, I was put to death". He had already in His lifetime said "no man taketh it from me, I lay it down of Myself, Mine own Self, this authority that I have received from My Father". Today as we think of all those movements toward the cross, we can so clearly see through men and their counsels and decisions and we can see that the thing is in His hand. He is dictating how it shall be and when it shall be. They are saying "not this" and He is saying "yes this". "Not on the Passover" He says "Yes on the Passover". He is dictating His own death, its time and its manner - in His hands. NOT "they took away My life" - "I laid it down of my own accord. I became dead. I became dead." WHY? There is another great question arises at once; WHY did He Himself, deliberately, of His own accord, of His own

decision, go into death? Well, the letter to the Hebrews throws a lot of light upon it doesn't it? That PROVED it, "He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil"! That He might deliver those who all their lifetime were in bondage through fear of death. He tasted DEATH in the behalf of every man. That's why He became dead.

But here it is, here it is in this beautiful statement here "Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins in His blood and made us a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father". That's why He became dead; this mighty US - this mighty Us - Who loveth US! Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it. Who loving us, Who loosed us, He might redeem us from all iniquity, Who MADE us a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father. That's why He became dead of His own choice: for US! For you, for me, for His Church. What a mighty US that is. That's the answer. Christ loved! Christ loosed! From death... and alive! Became dead and alive to deliver us from death. Death is the sum total of all human sin. Death is the sum of all Satan's power. Death is the sum of Satan's kingdom. "He plunged in His imperial strength, to cast the darkness down, He brought His trophy up at length, the foiled usurper's crown." That's why He became dead, to do that. That's the answer. "And I have the keys of death and of Hades". Of course keys are authority, we know that. Authority over death and of Hades. Jesus has said "Upon this rock I will build My Church, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I have the keys of Hades". What is that? For all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death... bondage through fear of death - that's the prison of Hades. He has plundered Hades, He has broken its gates and its bars. He has snatched the keys from the usurper, and wears them at His own girdle and His Church is DELIVERED from that bondage of fear! The gates of Hades shall NOT prevail against it.

It is all tremendous, but you see, you've got to place the Cross over this whole book. The Cross stands over everything in this book because it's the book of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every realm and therefore it is the book of the Lamb in the throne. In the throne! The Cross is the explanation of everything.

Well, I trust you catch a vision, the revelation of Jesus Christ in this which comprehends all that follows and all that with which you and I have to do, dear friends. I said this morning, this is the book which is introduced, or in its very introduction, tells us that there is a blessing attached to it. What blessing do you want and do I want? What is the greatest blessing that could come to our hearts? It would be to realize the glorious, triumphant issue of this long, long drawn out battle in which we are, how it's going to end and to realize it's going to end in glory. In GLORY! It's going to end with us with Christ in the throne. To REALIZE it, not just to be informed. It doesn't have enough wit with us to be told about it, but oh, if it could come to us as a revelation, as it came to John in Patmos, in tribulation, in patience. Suffering... because of this same issue we have made Jesus Lord, we have put Him in His place, we have no other Lord. All things for us are subject to Him. He is over all. And that brings, whether world persecution or not, it brings spiritual conflict, it brings tribulation into the life. It touches us everywhere, in our families, in our homes, in our businesses and everywhere this thing is touching us; if only, if only we would let go something, make some compromise, let down our standard, not be so utter for Christ. We'd have an easier time, it is possible, you can, CAN for the time being! But you cast away your crown.

That is it, to realize that in the tribulation and the patience, the suffering, and the conflict, and the pressure; the issue, the issue is absolutely certain. Jesus is coming out on top and we're coming out with Him. If that could really come into our hearts, the greatest blessing that could come to us... it would explain so much, it really would explain so much. All the problems and enigmas of our lives, all those things which come because of our relationship to this One Who is God's destined Heir of the universe... That provokes quite a lot. I say this is the blessing of this book, to know that. Not just to understand all its mysteries and symbols

but to know that. That He IS Lord and that nothing can alter that. The Lord give us that blessing in our hearts.

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