

The Christ of God

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the divinity and supremacy of Christ, highlighting His role as the Head and Centre of all glory in the universe.

Scripture: Luke 9:20, John 1:41, Romans 9:4, Ephesians 1:15, Ephesians 3:17

Topics: "Christology", "Divine Power"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the significance of understanding Jesus as 'The Christ of God,' emphasizing His divine appointment as the Head and Centre of all glory in the universe. He delves into the various stages of Christ's manifestation on earth, from His birth in Bethlehem to His exaltation at the right hand of God, highlighting His power over creation, sickness, and death, proving His deity. Vine urges believers to grasp the surpassing greatness of God's power displayed in raising Christ from the dead and uniting believers with Him, ultimately leading to the assembly being with Him in heaven. He concludes by exhorting listeners to trust in the Almighty Savior and anticipate the eternal joy of seeing Jesus in His full glory.

Transcript

Luke 9:20; John 1:41; Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:17; Romans 9:4

You will have gathered from the Scriptures I have read that our subject is to be "The Christ of God." We must distinguish His title as "The Christ" from other titles, such as "Lord." He is, we are told in Scripture, made both "Lord" and "Christ."

You will find no difficulty in seeing the difference between the two titles. The head of the British Empire is spoken of as His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, and also as Emperor of India. The two titles convey distinct thoughts to your mind.

And when we talk of the Lord Jesus Christ as "The Christ of God," we should be able to apprehend Him as the divinely appointed Head and Centre of all the display of glory with which the universe--the heavens and the earth--shall yet be filled. And as we ourselves are brought to understand a little of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in this way, we shall be able, in communion with God, to look out upon God's vast scheme of splendour.

Away in Northumberland I once climbed to the top of Cheviot--the highest hill of the Cheviot range--and from thence hoped to view the wide landscape, but, before my objective was reached, down came a

heavy cloud and everything was obscured! Why do I tell you this? Ah! if you allow the Spirit of God to lead you to His objective you need never fear a cloud! The shadow dwelt on Calvary's Cross, when He hung there in its darkness that sinners might be redeemed, making atonement to God for sin, that they might be brought from darkness to light.

But now, exalted at the right hand of God, we see Jesus upon the throne! There is no cloud on His victorious brow, and the Spirit would lead us up to those heights in faith, that we may be able to look out upon "the breadth and length and depth and height" of those glorious scenes of which He is the Centre.

In the Scriptures read we have Christ presented to us on earth--manifested here; then on the cross, lifted up between heaven and earth, suffering; next we see Him risen--on Resurrection ground--raised by God from among the dead, a real, living Man; higher still, we behold Him ascended, sitting upon the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens above all; and lastly, we are told who that Person is in Himself.

On earth He appears, born in Bethlehem--come, as to the flesh, of the royal line of David. He was legally the true Messiah as the genealogy of Matthew 1, shows clearly. As a child He was subject to His parents; but being about thirty years of age He was baptised of John, and was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the public service of God in Israel. Tempted too, of Satan, He came forth victorious to set men at liberty, to bring them into blessing for the glory of God. Were there any blind by the way? Not one need remain blind when the Messiah was there! Were any dumb? He gave them speech! Did the deaf seek Him? He gave them hearing! He went about healing all manner of diseases, preaching the Kingdom of God, and expounding doctrines which even the best scholars of the present day have to acknowledge outstrip their highest thoughts. Even in this so-called advanced twentieth century His teaching excels all.

Was He only a man who did such wonderful works and taught as none other? Whence His power and wisdom? Was He simply a man who was in that tempest-tossed boat with His disciples, and, standing up, rebuked the winds, and said to the waves, "Peace, be still?" Would the wind and the waves obey a mere man? Was it only a man that passed into that chamber where lay a little girl--mourned of her parents and friends--and said, "Maid, I say unto thee arise!" and she rose up? Death had taken place, but Christ brought in life.

Take another instance. Lazarus was dead and corruption had set in, still that same wonderful Person called to him with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth," and he came forth from the tomb, from death, and from corruption! Was He who did that only a man? Moreover, He Himself rose from among the dead!

Resurrection has declared Him to be the Son of God! He is Man truly, but He is also God. "Whom say ye that I am?" He once asked His disciples. To this question Peter, always ready, said, "The Christ of God" (Luke 9:20).

It does not appear that they then understood all that was involved in this reply. Moreover, there was one thing they all seemed to fail to apprehend concerning Christ, and that was the necessity of His sufferings, for not only was it foretold that the Christ was to be the centre of all the coming glory, but--and this is where the difficulty came, a difficulty with thoughtful Jews even to the present day--that "the Christ must suffer." All those glowing prophecies concerning Him, the throne, the dominion and the glory they might believe, but when it was said He was going to be wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities, they seemed unable to connect with the Messiah, the Christ who is yet to reign so gloriously. And so our Lord Jesus Christ after He had suffered and risen, had to correct some who sincerely loved Him, saying to them, "O fools and slow of heart to believe ALL that the Prophets have spoken: ought not

the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). Then He unfolded the Scriptures to them, and expounded to them out of all the Old Testament Scriptures "the things concerning Himself."

Again, later, He showed His disciples that the Christ must of necessity suffer and rise from the dead the third day (v. 46).

Thank God for the love that led Him to suffer. Had He not suffered, where would you and I be today? What would have been our lot had Christ not borne our sins and our judgment upon the Cross? How would He have been able to bring in the glory, and bring us to that glory, and establish His throne in righteousness, had He not suffered first? No, it had to be done. There He hung upon that cross, the Messiah suffering before entering into His glory, solving every judicial question raised by the fall and sin of man. His great love for us and for His God and Father sustained Him; the joy set before Him cheered Him; He endured the cross, and finally could say, "It is finished." "I have glorified Thee on the earth," He said to His Father; "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He has done the suffering. Work, the atoning work, is completed, and presently He will bring in the glory.

But before He does that, what is He doing now? He is maintaining the gospel for the saving of sinners. He is calling men and women out of the world, and bringing them to Himself. He calls them, and gives them the Holy Spirit, thus forming His assembly. And soon He will take that assembly away to be with Himself in the Father's house, and afterwards, when He comes out to reign in splendour and glory, He will bring that assembly--His body and His bride--with Him!

We have seen Him confessed upon earth, suffering upon the cross, and risen as a Man from among the dead--not to return as a spirit into the eternal, as some tell us--but as a Man exalted to the right hand of God! Yes, as a real Man. That is what defeats all the speculative theology, rationalism and spiritism of today. He was raised, not simply "from" the dead, but raised "from among the dead" as it should read--others were left in their graves.

Thank God, Christ, "the Man Christ Jesus," is risen! Our faith is therefore not in vain, and we who believe are no longer in our sins. Our faith is the faith of God's elect; but it is written, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). We know, however, that He is raised, and all our sins are put away, and those who believe are justified. "Handle Me, and see," He said to His disciples after He rose from among the dead; "for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39). He is a Man risen from the grave!

When the Jews look for and accept "another" (John 5:43) as their Messiah, they will have some difficulty in proving him to be truly of the seed of David, and the Christ of God must be that. Thank God, we know where to look for the seed of David today. The scholars among the Jews must feel very uncomfortable when they turn to the first chapter of the New Testament, and read the royal genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and see that opening statement--"Jesus Christ, the son of David!" They cannot deny the truth of it. The Christ who is risen from among the dead is of the seed of David, and when He speaks to us from heaven today, what does He say? "I am the Root and the Offspring of David:" I am before David--his "Root!" but as become Man, am after David--his "Offspring!" To Timothy Paul wrote, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from among [the] dead, of [the] seed of David, according to my glad tidings" (2 Tim. 2:8).

To the Church He says, "I am the Bright Morning Star." Do not lose heart at the darkness in theological circles at the avalanche of apostasy that is taking place today, for the Bright Morning Star shines out just

after the deepest darkness of the night. Christ is coming! The apostasy is a sign of its imminence! It is foretold in the Word. Meanwhile, He waits in heaven and we wait on earth.

God said to Him "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (Ps. 111). We have got not only a triumphant Saviour raised from among the dead but we have a glorified Saviour on the very throne of God.

In the epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle speaks of the exceeding greatness of God's power towards us who believe--the power by which "He wrought in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead" (1:20). And then he goes on to say, "He set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above every principality and authority and power and might and dominion and has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church [the Assembly] which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." This power which raised Christ from the dead is the power which has quickened us, raised us up together and livingly connected us with the Christ. That power has already united us together as His body, and presently that same power will by His last mighty movement in regard to the members of the body of Christ, transfer us in the twinkling of an eye from earth to heaven and put the assembly where her Head and Bridegroom already is. It is called not simply "The power of God" but "The surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe."

There are His acts of power in creation, in the heavens, on the earth, in the history of the nations, in Israel and with individual men but the exceeding greatness of God's power, which works on our behalf, is that which took our Saviour--the Christ after He died for our sins upon the cross--out from among the dead!

And now beloved brethren we have seen Him exalted above every principality and authority and power and dominion, above every range of government in the universe and He is set there by God as the Christ the Head of the assembly. Would to God that the Church, the assembly, could be wakened up to see her proper association with her glorified Head. The Head of the assembly is Head over all things and she is united to Him in His place of supremacy. Do you wonder, brethren that the Apostle went down on his knees and prayed the rather we might be strengthened so that the Christ the Centre of all the glory, might have His dwelling place, through faith, in our hearts--that in the very centre of our beings He might dwell in our affections, enshrined there by faith? He is indeed Centre of all the glory that is yet to be displayed and meanwhile He is not to be given a visitor's place in our hearts, but a dwelling place there.

Nor does He desire the assembly which is His body and His bride to allow Him as a King to rule upon the throne of our hearts, as some say, but He would "dwell" there. He values the faith and the love of our hearts during the time of His rejection from the world, and as Christ fills our hearts, we shall love all who belong to Him, and be able to look upon the breadth and length and depth and height of the wide range of glory of which He is the appointed Centre as the Apostle says "That ye may be able to fully apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height." What a prospect! With the eyes of the Spirit of God to view the vast scene of His glory is surpassingly wonderful and entrancing. Nor is that all; the Apostle prays that something still more precious may be the increasing portion of our souls--"The love of the Christ!"--the love which surpasses all knowledge, the love which makes us more than conquerors!

We have spoken of the Christ as confessed upon the earth suffering on the cross raised from among the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God.

And now, may I in closing beg of you earnestly, in these dangerous and apostate days, to lay hold of the truth as to who He is, to accept in faith the Spirit's testimony of His deity as given in Romans 9:5. There He tells us who the Christ of God is in Himself. It was to Israel the Christ first came. He was of Israel according to the flesh, but, mark what is written of Him--"Who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen." Do not be like Thomas when he first said to the disciples, "Except I shall see I will not believe." Rather be like him when he afterwards exclaimed in the presence of the risen Lord Himself, "MY LORD AND MY GOD!"

We have already shown that our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us, manifested when here upon earth that He was more than a man, that He was God manifest in the flesh, seen and heard. Now from heaven in the last book of the inspired volume, in the Revelation, He Himself tells us that He is "the Alpha and the Omega" of all divine revelation, the First and the Last of all that is divinely numbered, and "the Beginning and the End" of all the creation of God. In communication you never cease to use the alphabet, in number you cannot go further back than the first nor go past the last, and in all being you cannot go beyond the beginning and the end. We reach finality and eternal rest in Christ and that is explained because He is rightly described as "the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8), and again in chapter 21:12 and 13, "Behold I come quickly . . . I am Alpha and Omega etc."

Yes indeed, beloved brethren, He is God over all blessed for ever more. As a Man He is of the seed of David and of Abraham. As God--"Unto the Son"--it is said in Hebrew 1:8--"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." God has become visible to us in Him as the Son of the Father's love, the Image of the invisible God and when we get to Heaven what a wonderful and glorious sight it will be to see "JESUS."

His servants shall "see His face!" In eternal rest and rejoicing "His servants shall serve Him!" Where no night is--where He is their eternal sun--"They shall reign for ever and ever." "These sayings are faithful and true but what joy can surpass seeing in that glory the face of Him who suffered the agonies of the cross, who redeemed us by His precious blood, that we might be with Him in that glory.

Is there one here who is not yet sure that he or she will be there? Ah my dear hearer, simply trust in that Almighty Saviour here and now. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

And shall not we who have known Him for many years seek to answer increasingly to the Word of God, so that "holding the truth in love, we may grow up to Him in all things, who is the Head, the Christ" (Eph. 4:15. N.Tr.).

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