

Revelation of Jesus Christ - Part 9 of 10

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is about bringing to culmination and consummation everything in the age, with Christ as the standard of God, and understanding the Christian life and church as a declaration of Christ's life.

Duration: 47:21

Scripture: Revelation 1:1

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that Christ is the central focus and standard of God in all aspects of life. The main focus is on the revelation of Jesus Christ and how it completely transformed the Apostle Paul's thinking and understanding. The speaker highlights the importance of the Church understanding their position and the testimony entrusted to them in these final scenes of the age. The sermon concludes with the question of what it means to be a Christian and emphasizes that living according to Christ should be the governing motive and object of every believer.

Transcript

For the many friends who have not been with us through the earlier gatherings, let me say the very briefest possible word by way of retrospect. We have been led at this time to be occupied with the revelation of Jesus Christ. We feel that the Lord has led us in this way with more than the object of just studying something, but as related to the movements toward the consummation of this age, which we feel are so evidently taking place.

And that therefore, in the final scenes, the Lord is culminating and consummating his testimony on this earth. It is very necessary for his church to be very clear as to their position. And that position is essentially and inseparably a matter of understanding exactly what the Christian life and the Christian church is, and the testimony which is entrusted to them.

So, we have spent nearly three days with the first three chapters of the book of the revelation, particularly noting that as that book does bring to this culmination and consummation of everything in the age, the Lord takes very careful pains to give a full-orbed, clearly defined presentation of his Son. Significance of the very first chapter of that book is that Christ overshadows everything. Christ encompasses everything.

Christ stands before everything as the standard of God. And then all that follows, firstly in the dealing with the church, and then with the nations, and then with the kingdom of Satan, and then the bringing in of the

eternal kingdom, all that is governed by what Christ is, by that matchless presentation of himself. I go over that again in order that we may see where we are, the setting of what we are seeing today.

It has been there that the main part of our time has found us. This morning, we went back over to the Apostle Paul in this connection, and began to consider the content of his words in the second of his Corinthian letters, chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord. Seeing it is God who said, Let light be, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This morning, we spent our time with the beginning of what Paul saw in the face of Jesus Christ. We did note right at the outset that what he saw or in seeing the face of Jesus Christ simply means that the Spirit of God gave him an inward illumination or revelation of Christ. What he saw in the face of Jesus Christ brought about a tremendous revolution both in his being and in his whole outlook.

And the first thing that he saw in the face of Jesus Christ or in the person of Jesus Christ was God's purpose. Well, we spent our morning time on Christ as the purpose of God. This afternoon, we are going to be occupied with the second thing that Paul saw in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is, he saw Christ as God's pattern. I'm going to be quite simple in the way I speak and in what I say this afternoon because there are many young Christians here. What I say or the way in which I say it, I trust will help them particularly, but I trust it will be, if necessary, a corrective for us all.

It is exceedingly difficult to convey the impression that must have come upon Paul when he saw the Lord Jesus. That time of which he speaks when he said it, pleased God to reveal his Son in me. The tremendous effect that it had on that man.

I wish it were possible to convey to you something of that because it is not in the terms, the language, or even in the teaching. It is in the impact that we shall have the value. You may hear all that I have to say and missing that impact, it will be of very little value.

I want you, therefore, to try to enter into this in spirit. You see, when Paul saw Jesus Christ by revelation of the Holy Spirit, a whole system collapsed for him. It completely collapsed.

A whole mentality and way of thinking was shut on upside down, inside out. He had to go right away into the desert and spend two or three years there to think this thing out, to reconstruct everything in the light of this. It was indeed a revolution in that man.

And although we are Christians, and although we have all the teaching of Paul and the other apostles, we've got all the Christian tradition of the centuries, I do feel, dear friends, that there's the need of something like that with us. That we can have a system, a Christian system, just as thorough, just as complete, just as strong, with all its ramifications and paraphernalia as the Jews had, without the tremendous impact of it all. We can have it all.

Christianity has become very largely only another Judaism in that sense. Another system. I know it means much to you.

I take nothing from all the blessedness, reality Christ is to you. But still, I hold to this, that there's a great need of a revolution, even in the church and in Christianity at this time. And the same kind of revolution caused by the same kind of revelation as came to the Apostle Paul.

I trust that you will at least begin to see something of this as I go on on simple lines this afternoon. We have got to see, as Paul saw, Jesus as God's pattern. Jesus as God's model.

What Paul has shown us in his writings is that he came to see that before ever this world was created, before any of this cosmic system was set up, God had in view the constituting of a universe on the basis of Sonship, His Son. He was before all things. He was God's appointed mind concerning all things.

And all things were to be made with the embodiment of the spiritual and eternal features of Christ. And when God reaches His end, and we come out with the work completed, finally the thing that we'll obtain will be that in everything perceptible, everything in the creation will revealing something of Jesus Christ. And oh, what a wonderful universe that will be.

If we meet a little bit of Jesus Christ anywhere in anyone today, what a blessed thing it is. But think of that being universal and nothing else to it. Now, that is what was in God's eye and mind right back there in the eternity past.

And so, God set in motion all the creative processes and, by reason of necessity, all the redemptive processes, all the elective processes, all the sovereign and providential processes of history to work out this pattern, to perfect this design, all things according to Christ. That's Paul's great phrase. According to Christ.

According to Christ that controls everything. Paul came to see that and that vision, that perception and apprehension or regulation was the governing motive, power and object of everything for him, for me to live, said he, is Christ. Now then, we can break that up into very simple questions and answers.

What is a Christian? What is a Christian? How interesting it would be if you were handed out a half a sheet of notepaper, all of you and asked to put down your answer. What is a Christian? What is Paul's answer? What would your answer be? A person who believes certain things about the Lord Jesus? A person who has come to make Jesus their savior? Who has given himself or herself to Christ? How would you put it? But what is Paul's answer? And that's the true one. A Christian is a bit of Christ.

A bit of Christ. Every true Christian is a bit of Christ. We'll bear that out more fully as we go along.

From God's standpoint now, and he has laid the foundation for that, from God's standpoint now, the only thing that concerns him, is of interest to him in you, in me, as Christians, as believers, is that bit of Christ which we represent. That's all he's concerned with, that we are concerned. The bit of Christ that we are.

He's concerned, first of all, to have it as a bit of Christ. And then he is concerned to enlarge it to something more of Christ. And to bring it to as full a measure of Christ as he can.

And God's focus is upon the bit of Christ that has been made a part of us, that has been deposited in us by new birth. By new birth, God has deposited something of Christ in us. It may be a very much smaller thing than all its surroundings.

And we are the surroundings. But we are. To begin with, it may be.

But it is of transcendently greater intrinsic value than all the rest. To God, it is the value. He's prepared to do anything in relation to that.

And so, every true Christian, from God's standpoint, is just a bit of his Son. God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Now, I cannot gather up all the scripture that proves that, shows how that is. But that is the simple beginning. What are you when you become a Christian? What are you as a Christian? What is it that makes you a Christian? What is the Christian? And the Christian life, what is it? Well now, strip it of everything that has been gathered around it.

Men say, this is what makes a Christian. This and that, the other thing, comprises a Christian. Strip it of all that that has become the accretion of Christianity.

And come right down to this. A Christian is a bit of Christ. Go about this world.

Get that mentality. Realize that. I am, not when I'm in the meeting only, not when I'm with other Christians only, but wherever I am, I'm a bit of Christ.

In that measure, in that measure, where I am, Christ is. People have got to know it. That it is not I, a professing Christian, a religious person, a person who belongs to Christianity, but I, in very reality, as a bit of Christ himself.

I'm there. For me, to live, is Christ. Go on.

What is a church? What is a church? Now then, what was Paul's idea and mentality about churches? Do you really think that Paul set out on a campaign to set up churches, to bring churches into being, to build churches? Do you think that? Do you think that his vision and his mission in his mind was to seed churches set up all over the world? Think about that again. This is where we've got to rethink things. You use the word church or churches, you're only meaning companies of Christians.

You're only meaning groups in living together, gathering together in certain places, on a basis of corporate life. I believe most strongly that the Apostle Paul would repudiate the whole idea or suggestion that he felt himself chosen of God to go about this world setting up churches. You ask him what his business was in this matter? Why? After having got the individual parts of Christ in gathering them together and constituting them local companies, fellowships, churches if you like, you ask him why? He would simply answer you in the simplest terms I believe and yet with very strong feeling that there should be a larger expression of Christ in that place.

And by as many bits of Christ brought together as possible the measure of Christ should be as strong in that place as possible. In other words just that Christ should be all the more there. He's governed by this whole pattern of God that Christ should fill all things.

And he saw that two is better than one and three is better than two in this matter. And the more bits of Christ brought together forgive me putting it like that I must put it in simplest language the more bits of Christ there are really brought together so the stronger the impact of Christ in any place. No dear friends it is not God's idea to set up churches or Christian fellowship centres or that sort of thing institutions and what not that's not his idea at all.

Let's clear the whole mind on this matter. If any company of Christians fails in this respect to be there a corporate and an adequate expression of the Lord Jesus the presence of Christ commensurate with their numbers or their being there, they failed of the purpose of their existence in that place. There's no

justification.

I believe that that is exactly why the Lord sent to Ephesus as the representative church in which all were included repent or I will remove thy lampstand out of its place although there were so many commendable things they were things works labours yes toil things but evidently the thing was lost sight of in the things and the thing which alone justifies gives meaning to any local company of the Lord's people is that not the people and not their procedure not their forms but Christ Christ is Christ is found anybody who is seeking Christ will find him there and whether they're seeking him or not they'll meet him if they go there it's Christ so Paul would say Ephesus, Laodicea Thyatira, Sardis Corinth anywhere I'm not out to set up a Christian church there I'm out to bring Christ there to

have Christ there and the bringing together of these and I use the word again bits of Christ is only to increase the measure of Christ and if you want evidence from the other side that this is so remember that the great enemy knows the implications of Christ he knows the implications of the presence of Christ and especially the presence of Christ corporately expressed and if there's one thing that the enemy has set himself to do it is to destroy the fellowship of the spirit to scatter the believers to divide them to break up this unity of Christ because he knows that on the one side weakens Christ on the other side it strengthens his kingdom well there's no argument there at all there's no answer to that that's a fact beyond any question at all that this matter of the relatedness of

Christians is the most contended thing in this universe what are churches why meet together just that nothing other in the mind of God Christ is God's pattern then what about those two great things that belong to the church and the church's baptism and the Lord's table what are we well ask everywhere what kind of a church are you and what do you do well we believe in baptism various forms given to the name at different times we believe in and practice baptism you believe in and practice baptism of infants you call it you there believe in and practice baptism of adults and believers you believe the little water will do you believe a lot of water is necessary however baptism is a part of our order and system because we believe that it's a new testament part of the Christian church and all

and all see you can never never reach any conclusion of the whole matter by arguing about the right and the wrong of this method or this time don't you try the only way in which to settle this whole matter is to stand right back and say what according to the revelation of Jesus Christ in the new testament does this thing really indicate and Paul will give us undoubted light on this matter and he will tell us an accumulation of statements by him in this why baptism you want to know what it is, yes it's right it's right but it's not an ordinance, it's not a ceremony, it is not a rite, it is not a bit of a ritual baptism is just the way in which Christians say one whole thing has gone and Christ has taken its place it's something that testifies to the fact that now all the ground is

Christ's, we've died to all other ground everything else has died and been buried and now on this ground of resurrection it is only Christ and if baptism doesn't mean that it has no new testament meaning, you see it's related to this one thing it is not something to be just perpetuated and carried out because it's something that they did at the beginning it is something which has got to be brought right up to date with every new believer that they have definitely died and been buried to all that is not Christ and now they live and they live only for Christ it is Christ I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I but Christ that's utter isn't it so it's not the thing it's the meaning what about the Lord's table here again we believe in the Lord's supper, the holy communion or the

Lord's table whatever phrase applies to the different sections and we have it some once a quarter and some once a month and some once a week and that's our order and our procedure and that's what we believe is the way is that all we must have we must have the Lord's table we must have the Lord's supper because they did it in New Testament times and it's quite clearly the Lord's will it should be had it, it, it see, that's where the whole thing breaks down, it's an it it's something what is the Lord's table what is the loaf and the cup what is the loaf and the cup it is the churches and the believers continuous declaration that Christ is their life they have no life but Christ it's all Christ that's not going to communion service you see the emptiness and hollowness so much, the meaning is

good all well meant oh, oh power and presence of Christ that's the thing that matters not the ordinance not the maintenance of the order but the living Christ Christ is our life and that's not only individually and personally he is that he is my life and my only life bread and wine but he is the life of the church he is corporate life corporate life I earlier used that word bits of Christ it's an awkward word pieces of Christ fragments of Christ for when you take the loaf and break and you all 20, 30, 50, 100, 200 have that piece of the loaf is that a piece in itself no it's the loaf in representation seeing that we who are many are one loaf one loaf one loaf one body Lord's table is the declaration of that life which binds us, joins us and binds us and holds us together so that divisions

in the church nullify the very meaning of the Lord's table divisions amongst believers rule out the very significance of the loaf and the cup are a denial of it cannot be when you come to the Lord's table it's a contradiction because it is Christ and Christ is not divided Christ is not divided, Paul says that doesn't he is Christ divided no Lord's table is then representation of Christ as the abiding life of the church until he comes until he comes that testimony to Christ just Christ they say oh when you come to the Lord's table do remember that what are you doing just going through something that is part of the church form and order of Christian procedure oh no I am here declaring one thing in two ways firstly that Christ is my very subsistence I have no life I have no constitution I

have no maintenance I have no continuance apart from he is my existence I declare that for myself but here is a very certain thing I declare that my fellowship with other believers in Christ is also my life but Christ is my life collectively by fellowship by oneness by the unity of the spirit and that if I break that if I break that or allow that to be broken if I fail to try and repair any breach between me and another child of God I am simply saying that the Lord's table is a mere form robbed of all its meaning its real meaning and I am strangling my own spiritual life I'm doing injury to my own spiritual life because my life is not only an individual life it's a collective or corporate life we we depend for our life upon one another brethren Satan will rob us of our life by interfering

with our relationships be no mistake about it that can be very easily prove John what is ministry what is ministry now this doesn't only apply to those who minister any who minister can listen with all your ears but those who are ministered to what is ministry is it to make people know what the Bible contains as its subject matter from Genesis to Revelation well that's important very good in some senses it may be necessary as a foundation is it to get up addresses by research and study and get it off on to company of Christians oh I could go on like that it's not pleasant what is ministry any ministry and all ministry that does not make possible and provide for an immediate increase of the Lord Jesus is not the ministry of the Holy Ghost is not the ministry of Christ all ministry must

have as its immediate object the increase and the building up of Christ in his people that is the test not that it's interesting informative or anything else but that here Christ is being ministered I'm being brought right

into touch with Christ Christ is being brought into touch with me not a lot of words no I'm having to face up to the Lord Jesus in some way today our issue of this word is Christ the living Christ that is ministry that is ministry you see it's like that you can take all that I'm saying back to Paul take it all back and take it back into this second letter to the Corinthians alone that's it and then for the present because of the time this final question what is evangelism what is evangelism evangelization is the business of the church what is evangelism try not to

misunderstand me when I say that the end that God has in view is not just to get people saved, he wants them saved he sent his son that they should be saved we cannot be too much concerned for their salvation but that is not the end upon which the eye of God is resting, evangelism the salvation of men's souls with God is a related matter it is to people the kingdom of heaven with Christ Christ's people more and more in whom he may have his dwelling to be an outshining of himself listen when it pleased God to reveal his son in me that I might proclaim him among the nations evangelism is not to get so many people converted evangelism is through their being saved to increase the measure of Christ in this universe that's a sufficient and a much greater motive I think to be able to count heads

and say we've had so many conversions, oh no let us say rather, Christ is getting more and more ground in this way different mentality and I am not quite certain that the Lord is not very much reserved and straightened because of this wrong idea let me put it the other way I believe that if really the whole concern in evangelism was not to be able to count heads and say so many converts and so many have signed the cards and so on and so on but to say by Christ is gaining ground I believe that if that were more the object and the motive God would come into it more because I do believe dear friends, and forgive me for putting it as my belief, that doesn't matter at all what I believe but test it by the word of God that where Christ is the one, the only the full object in view God's interest

is the greater God commits himself, so it must be in all this, the individual fragment of Christ oh to be here as Christ here then the Father will be with you for the local companies to be here in this neighborhood as Christ, God will commit himself, so in everything else everything else that we have mentioned, Christ only Christ Christ the beginning Christ the end Christ all in all

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