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# The Burning Fire of the Spirit



*T. Austin-Sparks*



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# The Burning Fire of the Spirit

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*Transcribed from messages given in October, 1959. The spoken form has been retained verbatim.*

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# Chapter 1 - A Seven-fold Expression

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 first born 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, and He made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced 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, 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, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, 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, and 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 burnished 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. And 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 for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades."

Chapter 4, at 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 and that those who hear them are really 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 realise 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. I well remember Dr Campbell Morgan once saying with emphasis, "God help the preacher whose hearers do not fulfil his ministry!" That's just what we feel about it.

Now, as to this message, you see, we've 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 a 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 is 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 conclusion, 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 Pergamum 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 recognise 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; it 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 crisis 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 exhorted, 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 presence 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? 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'll 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 with this: that it seems that the greatest delinquents, those who have failed most, are offered the highest blessing. 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, and 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 that you have there a presentation of the *fullness* of Christ. How full! I confess to you, dear friends, that in meditating on this for many days, for a long time now, I have found my greatest difficulty, my greatest difficulty to be to comprehend the fullness of every fragment. I'm not exaggerating when I say that into almost *every fragment* of this presentation of Jesus Christ you could crowd a *mass* 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 characterisation of the risen and governing Son of Man.

It's into those seven aspects that so much is crowded; that everything is crowded. We may just mention what they are: the garment with which He is clothed down to the foot. The girdle of gold about His breasts. The head and the hair: white as wool. The eyes: as a flame of fire. The feet: as burnished brass. 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? The seven-fold characterisation 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 characterisation is *the* basis of the examination which is going to take place, and of the judgement which is going to be declared. It's 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. If 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 1 verse 4 you have this phrase: "The seven spirits which are before His throne". And if you pass over to chapter 4, at verse 5 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 seven-fold expression.

### **A Seven-fold 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'll have more to say about that presently.

This is, to come back to chapter 1, the expression of Christ by the Holy Spirit in a seven-fold characterisation. They are before the throne; it is the *throne* that is here in action, let us keep that in mind. It's 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. The picture is quite simple, even through the intricate symbolism: the throne is the seat of government.

The ministry of the Spirit is the seven-fold, "what the *Spirit* saith to the churches". Notice that: seven times, "what the *Spirit* saith". And what the 'Spirit saith' 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 saith..." seven times over. It's that. The seven lamps of fire which are the seven Spirits of God. It is what that throne is looking for, requires, and demands. So that the ministry relates to those Divine features which are the features of the Son of Man.

Time to hurry on, much as we want to we're brought up short by that title at once: "One like unto the Son of Man". The margin corrects it, because the same writer, the same writer wrote in the gospel chapter 1:51 and there you can't mistake the fact that he says, "*the* son of man". Jesus saying to

Nathanael, "Hereafter 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 detail 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 that of all places in the Bible, that here you would find "the Son of God". He 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, God's original, *first* thought as to this special creation called "man". When 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. The 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. Oh, when 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. The church is chosen for that. Seven lamps of fire, they'll 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, of 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, it 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.

Do 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're told precisely, *immediately* man had sinned they *knew* that they were naked. The realisation of it. Their consciousness was changed because their nature was changed. And the changed nature was first marked by a sense of shame; shame. Do you notice that the very first work, genuine work of the Holy Spirit toward redemption and recovery is to produce a sense of shame? I'm afraid many supposed, professed conversions lack that, or lack it sufficiently, but any *true*, genuine work of the Holy Spirit begins there. We cover up our face with shame... the consciousness of our undoneness, our... what the Bible means by our *nakedness* in the

sight of God: shame.

Look here in chapter 3 of this book, at verse 17: "Because thou sayest I am rich and have gotten riches and hast 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 a flame of fire... You think you're all right, you think you're covered; 'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire 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 truths. God immediately proceeded to make clothing for man, to cover him, to put away from His own sight man's sin.

Now 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's 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. Oh, we could go over that whole ground 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 saints; 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, even in our religion and even in our feigned spirituality; making an impression of meekness or what-not. And behind it, it's the impression of ourselves! Oh no. We are right at the beginning of 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 ye on the Lord Jesus." "Ye have *put off* the old man..." the figure there, quite clearly in the original languages are the garments being put off, one garment being put off and another being put on. You have *put off* that garment of Adam, the old man, and you've put on Christ. Another garment, another clothing.

The first challenge of the Holy Spirit is this: How much of a view of *us* is appearing? What we are?

Making an impression? Oh, God save us from wanting to make an impression... 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 us... 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. We can't do that in our natural condition because that is nakedness and shame. You 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 this: every aspect of Self coming into the picture, it does; every aspect of ourselves coming into the picture. The Spirit is a lamp of fire... exposing, searching, determining. And that with this One in view.

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, coming into the presence of a person of honour. I remember reading the Seer of Chelsea, Carlyle, going on a visit to Queen Victoria. And being what he was, a 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; the man hadn't any sense for what is fitting for the presence of a queen. Well, that's only a sideline, 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, and say, "Now, that's not consistent with the Lord, you'll have to change your clothes a bit in this matter..." you 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 adornments... He saw right through to their nakedness. Oh, how scathing to hypocrisy, pretence! God sees. God sees. No, that won't do, but here is a blessing for those who will seek continually to cultivate that sense of what really belongs to the Lord; the honour, the glory. The Old Testament fragment comes back to us with new force, "Worship the Lord in holy array".

## Chapter 2 - First Love

We come back again to the book of the Revelation. Chapter 4, second half of verse 5: "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God."

Chapter 1 at verse 4: "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..."

Seven lamps of fire... burning before the throne... which are the seven Spirits of God.

I will do my best to help those who were not here this afternoon, to draw into line with us in the way that we feel we are being led at this time. We were pointing out that these seven Lamps of Fire before the throne represent the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Lord Jesus as He is presented in chapter one.

Careful reading and meditation upon these three chapters will, I think, make it quite clear that the presentation of the Lord given in chapter one is the ground upon which the churches - as here, but representatively the church - is being judged; and that in the light of all that the Lord had given. We said that there comes a time in the history of the Lord's people sooner or later when He comes to draw up the accounts and to challenge and test in the light of what He has given. A crisis comes, it may be in the individual life, as in the life of the whole church, or of any local representation of it. There comes a time, when the Lord, having given and been very patient and sought to make His grace known, when of necessity, for Himself and for them, He must say, "Now here, we can't just go on giving and teaching. We must know where we are over it all. We must see how much there is that really represents what has been given". It's a time of crisis, it's a time of upheaval, a time of deep searching... it may be a very painful time. There are big issues bound up with such a time, as for the future. And that is what is represented by these three chapters so far as the church is concerned.

You go on through the book and you'll find the same thing is carried into the world and the nations and everything is being judged in the light of the fact of Jesus Christ. The title of the book ought to be its first words; I notice that the title that men have given it is, "The Revelation of John the Divine". The book says it's the "Revelation of Jesus Christ"; that *is* the title and that applies to the whole book, not only the beginning, but right through. And everything is being brought to the judgement throne by the Holy Spirit.

Now this, we have said, this presentation of the Lord Jesus, as a seven-fold, mainly a seven-fold, characterisation. That is, He is presented in the main in seven particulars; particular features. And the Lamps of Fire correspond to those features. And these Lamps of Fire are the burning testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus - heavenward before the throne - you go on to later in the book and you find the phrase is used earthward which are the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth. So that in heaven and on earth everything is being judged and determined according to Christ; that's the final judgement of everything, or the basis of the final judgement. Well, that's rather a poor synopsis or summary of a lot of time and a lot of ground covered earlier.

We looked at the first of these Lamps of Fire. I would like just to add a word to what we said in that connection. It relates to the first feature of Christ presented: "Clothed with a garment down to the foot". And this is the Holy Spirit's *burning* testimony to the fact that it is *only what Christ is, as a*

*covering for all that we are*, that can stand before God. That is one of the seven things that the Spirit saith unto the churches, unto us. It's a burning testimony of how greatly has the Lord taken pains to burn that into the church, that it must, it *must* be a church that is *covered* as to its whole natural life. If it is not, as at Corinth and some other places, if it is not, it's a terrible exposure and a terrible judgement.

The judgement of Corinth, or the threatened judgement of the church in Corinth, was, as you know, that *all* its works would go up in smoke, in the testing of the fire. And they were to be saved only and just so as by fire and nothing else, but just getting through. And everything else lost... because they were naked, that is, as you look into that letter, it was what they were in *themselves*. Paul says, "When this and that obtains... are ye not men? Do you not speak as men? You're behaving as men." He's saying, "This is not Christ! This is just not Christ, to behave like that, to go on like that, to do those things, to have those conditions; that's just not Christ! You are *naked* before God." We need to be clothed with Christ. That's a burning thing in the New Testament. May we not be found naked before Him in the judgement.

The first Lamp of Fire... and how intense is its heat! How searching is its light. How discriminating is its effect. Oh, dear friends, do not take this just as words, teaching; you and I have to stand in the everlasting burnings. The test now, and the test at last is going to be: How much of Christ adorns us to the hiding, the hiding of what we are in ourselves? Something to think about and pray about, it's our battleground. That is the testimony of Jesus.

Now we pass then to:

### **The Second Lamp.**

These Lamps, or these energies of the Holy Spirit (for a lamp of fire is a thing of energy, there's nothing merely passive about that, it's energetic) if these Lamps of Fire correspond to those aspects of Christ in the presentation, what is the second lamp? To what does the Spirit direct attention in the second place?

Again, look at the vision of the Son of Man and then look at the churches. You come on it immediately, come on it immediately: "Clothed with a garment down to the foot..." and what next? "And girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle... Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle".

We know in Biblical symbolism what a girdle suggests or represents, it is strength unto action. The girdle speaks of strength, girdedness not looseness, strength for action. A garment drawn together so that it does not in any way interfere with the work on hand. The girdle, then, is strength for action.

Breasts, ever and always, suggest the service of love. The service of love. And the gold, as we know well, is that which is of God. That which is of God. Putting these three things together we have Christ in that feature of steadfast, steadfast and purposeful love, steadfast as purposeful Divine love, as against the fickleness and impersistence of human love, of man's love where God is concerned. And I say to you that you come on it immediately, the very first address is to Ephesus.

Ephesus... the final word about Ephesus, with whatever commendation could be, or recognition of virtues, the final word is, "I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love, consider from whence thou are fallen. Repent and do the first works". First love, first works... there's your example. The Lord comes in terms of this steadfast, purposeful, consistent, persistent Divine love to which they, and we, owe everything. Where would any one of us be tonight if He hadn't kept on loving,

persisted in love, if He had been as fickle as we are, as impersistent as is our love? That was the trouble which to the Lord was greater than all the other values at Ephesus; with Him it outweighed everything else, indeed He placed the continuance of that vessel as of service to Him upon this issue, this issue:

### **First Love.**

Turn to the gospel by John. We have this: "Jesus..." (chapter 13) "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He would depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He *loved them unto the end*, unto the uttermost". And the next is the girdle of that love: "He riseth from supper, layeth aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself, then He poureth water into the basin and began to wash the disciples feet, to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded..." Having loved, He loved to the end. The persistent love.

I read this morning what we all know so well, how one man declared that his love for his master could stand up to anything, even to death. We know what happened. But I noticed this, that when it says that about Peter, his declaration that though all should forsake Him, he would not, he would not! I notice that the writer adds, "and so said all of them". So said all of them! We put it all onto Peter, but they all said the same thing. You can almost hear them, if you like, Peter said that, and so, so said the others, "So will I!", and another, "So will I", and "So will I". So said *all* of them. Then Jesus said, "All you shall be offended of Me this night for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." And the sequence when the soldiers came from the high priest with their torches and their spears and staves, it says, "They *all* forsook Him and fled". Well, He knew all about that, how they were made, what would happen; He told them so. But having loved, having *loved*, He loved to the end.

He was indeed girded with that kind of Divine love that presses through, that suffers long, that does not give up; persistent, faithful love. Faithful love. Now, we all agree that that is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus. And we must be impressed with the fact that the very *first thing* that He talks about to the church is that very thing; is that very thing. That is really where, when He comes to the seven churches, where He begins.

I don't rush on dear friends, because I'm not concerned to say so much, I'm concerned that we are all before the Lamp of Fire. And our search? And we see in its light what the Lord is after, what is here called: "first love", first love. What are its characteristics? Well, of course, it is a fullness to the first motive. I trust that it can be said to be true of all of us here that there was a time in our Christian experience when the Lord just captured and captivated us in such a way that He gained a complete committal of our life to Himself and was *everything* to us; when it first became like that. If there's anyone here that cannot say that that was their experience, it's not too late, it's not too late - you can be captivated by the Lord Jesus more than once in your life and some of us do know mightier captivations at different times. But those of us who do know that first wonderful experience when we saw the Lord and the Lord found us... how full of Him we were! How absorbed we were all the day and while we were having to be engaged in other things, absorbed we were with the Lord, just longing for the other things to be got out of the way in order to get busy for the Lord in a more direct and immediate way. How He filled everything for us!

Now, the apostle Paul gives us a marvelous picture in his letter to the Philippians. First of all he says, "That is *exactly, exactly* what happened to the Lord Jesus Himself". I put the meaning of it this way, that isn't what he said, but there's no doubt about it that this is what it meant; speech after the manner of men. There was a point where the love of the Son toward the Father in terms of the Father's

interest and glory, heart purpose and desire, that love of the Father was so great, so captivated Him, that He stripped Himself of everything and *emptied* Himself of everything in heaven's glory - what He called in His prayer, "The glory which I had with Thee before the world was...". He let it all go out of His love for the Father and the Father's love for this world. That's one side of the picture. You turn over the page, and you find that that same love has been begotten in the heart of this man Paul and he tells us there, in such strong full terms, what effect it had upon him, just tells us all the glories, that men call glories in this world. Glories of ancestry, of inheritance, of birth, of training, of position, of achievement - all the things that this world calls glorious, and then Jesus came into the picture for Paul and he said, "Those things which *were* gain to me in those days, in that realm, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, I count them as *refuse* for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Here's a man, maybe only in the human terms, but following the way of his Lord, the way of love, showing that first love with him right at the beginning meant the Lord had first place in all things, in all things, indeed *nothing* else could possibly stand in the way or the place of the Lord Jesus. That's first love - first love - what it does, the effect that it has. Now, we know that Ephesus had had an experience like that.

(By the way, let me put in parentheses, I heard that one of the brothers gave a message on this here a few weeks ago. I have deliberately refused to inquire what he said, or to read the notes, because I'm always afraid of subconsciousness; that something might come out that was not my own. So I'm quite in ignorance. If the Lord says the same thing tonight, it's the Lord speaking; that's my confidence, it's the Lord speaking, not anything that has come secondhand.)

Now, Ephesus had had an experience like that, you know what happened when the Word was preached to them when the Lord Jesus was brought to them. They were devotees of the sciences and of the pagan mysteries and they had a library which ran into a very great sum of money for value. When Jesus came, through His servants in the marketplace, they piled up their books, their treasures, their costly things and sent them all up in flames. *That's* the value compared with Jesus! First love... "Consider from whence thou art fallen...".

Dear friends, this is what the Lord comes back for, and says, "I've loved you like that, oh I've loved you, and kept on loving you like that... at very great cost, but I've not counted the cost for love's sake, for love never does count the cost in that way, in that way. I've loved you like that. I have given you so much, I really have given you so much for so long..." What's the measure of your return? What is the measure of that where you're concerned? Is it like that *now*? Was it more like that at one time? Is it less like that now? Is it? Blessed be the man and woman here who can stand up and say, "No, it's more today than ever, it's more today than ever". That's good, but it may be some of us have got to meet this challenge.

Oh, oh, the blunted edge... blunted by familiarity with Divine things. How the edge can be blunted by familiarity, "Oh, we've heard it all before! We know it all." See? Familiarity. Perhaps that was Ephesus; the tragedy of familiarity, of easy facility to get Divine things. You see when people can't get them! Some said to me, even today, "We're starved, we've come to be fed, we're starved!" And there are many, many like that in this world we know. When it's so easily obtainable and there's so much of it to hand, how it just blunts the appetite, the edge of the appetite.

If we settle down because... well, it doesn't matter very much, it doesn't matter very much, we won't take the trouble, put ourselves out... it's always there when we want it. Sometime perhaps when we would go miles, miles, hundreds of miles for a bit of spiritual food; today we might perhaps not be willing to walk a mile. So much, when we feel inclined, is there; forgive me if I put it wrongly, but you know it is so possible for first love to lose its edge because of this familiarity and this facility,



this abundance; that it's there.

Or it might be the lost freshness of a walk in the Spirit. Now, a life in the Spirit, a walk in the Spirit, always has a freshness about it; really it does! It doesn't matter, dear friends, how long you've been on the way, how much you've received, how much you know, this is the marvel of a life in the Holy Spirit: you never seem to overtake what there is for you, you know it! It doesn't lie in the past, indeed, you know quite well that your life won't be long enough to catch up on what you've already sensed and discerned. I'm not exaggerating, no, what I'm saying is that a life in the Spirit has about it a continual freshness, newness, a sense that there's something more, something more. Now *that* was the characteristic at the beginning, wasn't it? "My, what a world we've come into! What a new world! How everything is new! What can we do with it? So big, so wonderful!" Is that true of every one of us today in our spiritual life? Like that? It's a wonderful world that we've come into, this world of Christ. Is it like that?

The lost freshness of a life in the Spirit, the deadly effect of formality, of routine - many Christian things are routine - you go through the same routine all the time, you've brought it down to that; it's the way it's done, it's the form of things. Oh, God deliver us from the blighting, deadly effect of formality and make everything live! Now, we can't do that, mark you, by trying to be original and change things in order to get out of that difficulty. No, you can't do it that way. This is the *burning* Lamp of the Spirit.

### **Burning Lamp of the Spirit**

If the *fire* is not there, no methods or changed methods, or uniqueness, or singularity, or anything else can take its place. It's the *fire* of Life, the Life of the Spirit.

It may be putting things in the place of the Person, even Christian things. Christian work, you know, can be a very, very harmful thing if it becomes an end in itself. The enemy is very, very busy to make Christian workers so occupied with the *work* and all its demands, and all its many aspects, to draw away from the Lord Himself. That is, of course, the confession and the tragedy of many a servant of the Lord. The work... got to give an address, got to give addresses; very well, very well. Oh, there's a subtle snare in always reading your Bible, or listening to messages with your eye upon people to whom you're going to give it. You can't believe how damaging that is. Perhaps I'm only speaking to some here.

Dear friends, if you and I do not speak to others the thing that has already spoken to us, and dealt with us, and challenged us, and faced us up, the Lord deliver us from our speaking. It must be like that. But, you see, the work, the demands can just come into the place of the Lord Himself and the fire, the fire is damped down like that.

Well, first love is always characterised by vision and purpose; you know that in the natural, it is more so in the spiritual. Vision! That is, there's a future, there's something on ahead. There's a tremendous prospect that *is* a constituent of first love. You see it in the natural: there's something to live for now, some purpose in life, some meaning in life, something ahead that draws you on. That's first love; quite pure and simple. Are we like that all of us? Vision? Purpose? If that goes, if that goes, we are fallen, we are fallen in the eyes of the Lord. We've come down.

First love is preparedness to suffer, to pay a price, to go on with the object of our love whatever it costs and whatever people say or do; that's first love. Well, one could go on like this, but you see, and I'm quite sure you know, many, many other features belong to this: "thy first love... thy first

love". And because of it, "thy first works".

Oh, may the Lord find His appeal to us having some real effect and drawing out our hearts again. If this does search us like the lamp, if this does burn us like the fire, may we listen, repent, and do the first works. "Listen to what the Spirit saith unto the churches..." There's the Lord.

I know we'll never fully measure up to Him in this matter, we'll always fall short of the pattern. But the question is: there's a lamp of fire, is it burning? Is it burning? There's no hope unless the lamp of fire, or in other words, the Holy Spirit, is just having His true effect in our lives - for that's why He is here. That is His work: to reproduce in us what is true of the Lord Jesus. And we all agree that this is true of Him; *this* is true of Him - having loved, He persists in love, He doesn't give up, His love does not break down and disappear. The Holy Spirit has come that the love of Christ should be shed abroad in *our* hearts by the Holy Spirit - that kind of love. And if this is a call, let us respond. If, dear friends, you can stand up to this and say, "Yes, I know what you're talking about and I can say without any hesitation that today there's no loss, no loss from what there was, indeed it's much more so now". Well, alright, that's good if you can say that, I hope we'll all be able to say that.

Nevertheless the Lord's word is given to us, He speaks. He comes before us in this vision and He says, "This is what I'm like. This is what I want you to be like". First love...

Shall we pray.

Our Father, we can only just pray and appeal to Thee, that it may be true of every one of us that rather than there should be loss and weakening, there should be the blazing up of that flame, the intense heat of Thy love in our hearts, that all these characteristics of it may be made more true. Oh Lord, save us from all the vitiating influences and possibilities of this life, this world. Deliver us, we pray Thee, from losing anything that Thou hast given us. Thou hast said so much, in Thy love Thou hast said it, given us so much in Thy love and now Thou dost come, and Thou dost come for the fruit that Thou hast the right to expect. We do not want disappointment to be in Thy face, or disappointment to be in Thy heart. The Lord find in us that which answers to His own heart, more and more so, that He may be satisfied with seeing the fruit of His travail. We all need more love, much more love for the Lord, we need much more love for one another. Oh Lord, increase this great, great virtue in our lives by the mighty operation of Thy Spirit in Jesus Name. Amen.

# Chapter 3 - The Unveiling of Jesus Christ

This evening, leaving aside very much that might have been said as right out of the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, I'm going to confine myself to a word on the first clause of the book, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ".

## The Revelation of Jesus Christ

We might quite rightly change that word from "revelation" to "unveiling" - that is even nearer to the original word than "revelation". The unveiling of Jesus Christ.

We have seen that as we move on into this book, we move into a situation that really does need speaking to. On the one hand, it's a situation of spiritual loss and failure, weakness, and many other conditions and features which even the Lord Himself, in all His grace, had to deplore. The renewing of the life of His people, and the restoring of those primary and primal values of their beginnings; then it was a situation of great difficulty, many difficulties, sufferings, and trials, and adversities as we have seen from various quarters and of various kinds - that the Christians of those times were both actually in a time of much adversity and were moving yet more deeply into suffering. To one of these churches the Lord said that they were *about* to suffer, they were *about* to be cast into prison, they were *going* to have tribulation for a specified time. It was a time when Christians both actually needed real help, stimulus, and needed to be prepared for further battles, further conflicts, and further suffering. These were the two main aspects of the general situation.

And we stand back and ask, in the light of those facts, how did the Lord, and how does the Lord, meet that need? Indeed, we might say: how does the Lord ever meet a great need? What is that which will supply the need, and that which alone will supply it and be the key to the problem, the answer to the demand, and the assurance or the assured ground both of recovery, renewal, and of fortification for the suffering? And the answer has ever been and always is: a new revelation of the greatness of Jesus Christ - an unveiling of His greatness.

That is the very platform, we may say, upon which and from which the Lord moves into these situations and into all the situations that follow in this book; He prefaces everything with this fresh revelation or unveiling of His own personal greatness. You know that has ever been the way, Abraham was called upon to make tremendous decisions and sacrifices. In his native country and city (marvelous and rich civilisations, a very full life indeed) and without assurance that his movement would be justified, he was called upon to move with sealed orders, "Get thee out and to a land that I will show thee...", "I will show thee, when you get there..." a tremendous move, very costly and very testing. But if you have wondered how it was that Abraham went through, met all the tests and at last survived, you have, I think, the answer in these words: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Ur of the Chaldees...". If ever that happens, you've got something to move on, you've got a background, you've got something that will again and again come to your rescue in a time of difficulty.

Moses was called upon to undertake a tremendous responsibility. We know the whole story now, Moses was not altogether ignorant of what he had got to face in Egypt and afterwards, and we may wonder sometimes how he got through and kept to the course, but we know that he met God face to face. It could be said equally, that the God of glory appeared to him. References are made several

times in the Bible to that encounter with God in the book and we are told that he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. That was the secret of his sustenance.

Joshua was called as a young man to face tremendous responsibilities and undertaking. In the ridding and clearing of that country of those ten kingdoms, getting that people (such a people... he knew them) in to possess, and all that was bound up with it. And no wonder the Lord had to repeat one word to Joshua continually to keep him on the move, "Be of good courage, be strong and of good courage... only be of good courage... only be strong...". How did the Lord give to Joshua the basis? "He lifted up his eyes and saw the captain of the host of the Lord..." from that time it was alright, he could go on and go through.

Isaiah was a young man in a very, very difficult day. One of those very, very cloudy days in Israel's history, and he was taking up his great prophetic ministry in the face of great difficulties and threatening problems. How did he get through? "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up," he said. That's the answer.

Paul... if ever a man had to face greater difficulties, oppositions and antagonisms and sufferings and peril and what not, more than that man... how did he get through? He saw the Lord, for "The Lord appeared unto him..." he saw the greatness of Jesus Christ. Stephen triumphed as he saw the heavens open and he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. And so we could go on.

But here... the Lord's people had come to a point where there was going to be a devastating blow struck at their corporate life; just on the point of that final siege of Jerusalem in this dispensation, when everything was going to be shattered and scattered. The great earth-shaking was about to take place. All that the Lord Jesus Himself had foreshadowed, "not one stone left upon another..." and all those other things, terrible things, all about to take place within a very little time. How were the believers going to get through? The Lord took up a man, we don't know now exactly who it was, some say one and some say another, but he took up a man to write what we call, "the letter to the Hebrews". And you see how he begins - almost a matchless unveiling of the greatness of Jesus Christ: "Who, being the express image of His person... the effulgence of His glory" the greatness of Jesus Christ.

And the Lord was saying through that letter, "If only you can get that as your foundation, you'll go through it all". You will not go back because you are being tempted to do as perhaps you're contemplating doing, you'll go on, you'll go on if only... you'll see how great your Lord is. So he laid the foundation for survival of faith, survival of faith because that's the issue. You know, it all comes up in the eleventh chapter - the survival of faith on the ground of the apprehension of the greatness of Christ.

And now you come to this book of the Revelation and again you're in the presence of these things. On the one side: spiritual declension, failure, breakdown, loss; on the other side: suffering, growing suffering, terrible afflictions for the church. How will the one be remedied and recovery take place? What is the key to a renewing of spiritual life when it's got to low ebb? *How shall they go on through the tribulation and the tribulations and come out in victory in the City of God?* Well, the answer is again - it's the Lord's only answer, it always has been His one answer, it has always been successful, it's the only one that will be successful in any situation of need: *a new unveiling of the greatness of the Lord Jesus.*

But oh, dear friends, these are words, these are words. When we say these things, and we all agree that they're true, that's right, we know it, but having said it, with all that we can say like that, then we

are so helpless. We're so helpless because it's the thing and not talking about it. You see, if, if only, by the Holy Spirit (there's no other way, no other means) we could capture a new glimpse of His greatness, how many problems that would solve, and questions that would answer, and need that would meet if only it could be like that! How overwhelming it would be... when I say "overwhelming", I mean how much would be overwhelmed - a mighty tidal wave making all these rocks upon which we threaten to flounder as nothing, they're sunk beneath it - disappear from view. Now, that's not just language. Look, who is writing this? It's the apostle John. The apostle John! Yes, that man who walked with Jesus of Nazareth, listened to Him and watched Him at work, and then at the supper and at other times, sat next to Him and put his head upon His shoulder; the most familiar picture of a man alongside of a man, close association, very devoted, very affectionate. I never could understand why John called himself, "the man whom Jesus loved" but there you are, it showed that there was a kind of familiarity, perhaps a sacred, holy familiarity between John and Jesus, like that, on very human terms.

Listen! That same man says, "When I saw Him I fell as one dead..." it's the same Jesus, and the same man. "I fell to the ground as one dead..." and if that One had not come and laid His hand upon him and said, "Fear not John, I am the first and the last, I am the living One..." John would have been there a dead man, or as a dead man. The same Jesus, but look at the transition: from the Jesus of history to the Christ of glory! That's the difference; you see, that is the difference from the John of the gospels to the John of the Revelation - a marvelous and mighty movement. He never felt like that when he walked the earth with Jesus, devoted as he was, perhaps sometimes awestruck and awe-inspired. With his fullest consciousness of who Jesus was, it was not until he saw Him glorified, that he went down helplessly prostrate like a dead man. I say, it was a great transition, from the Jesus of history, to the Christ of glory.

And dear friends, I take nothing whatever from the values and blessings of the gospels when I say that I'm sometimes just a little afraid that we dwell too much upon the Jesus of history and fail to see or to remember that the men who wrote those four gospels wrote them long after Jesus was glorified. They did not, at some point toward the end of His life when they perhaps began to sense that He would not be with them much longer, get away and decide to write the story of His life, of His birth, and His manhood and His teaching, and His miracles, and that as a human story, as an earthly story. They had all the mighty facts and realities of His resurrection, ascension, and heavenly glory which they were seeking to crowd into that story of His life here and say, "That One was this One; that was not just Jesus of Nazareth, that was the mighty Son of God from heaven!" They are crowding every incident with the fullest apprehension that they had of the glorified Christ, Christ now there at the right hand of God, not just a human story. That is the only way to preach the gospel from the gospels.

You notice, when after His ascension and His glorification they preached or they wrote, how little, how remotely little, they ever said about the three and a half years. A fragment here and there... they said very little about His teaching, and His miracles, and His walk about Palestine and that; very little indeed. They were all occupied with this One who had been crowned with glory and honour. That was their message. That One? Alright, Jesus of Nazareth, if you like, "who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil..." sort of a passing reference to all that, a summary, but! God raised Him. God honoured Him. This One! It will not get us very far just to be occupied with the incidents of His earthly life, however precious they are. If we are going on and going through, we need an apprehension of that fullness of glory that is His now.

### **The Greatness of Christ**

You see, dear friends, it is because, it is just because He has been robbed or stripped of His essential greatness that we have down the centuries the deplorable conditions that have obtained. Our liberal theologians have stripped Him of His deity. With what result? Oh, *devastating* results in the impact of Christ upon this earth. They've made Him a lesser Christ than He is. The philosophers have just made Him one in their gallery of great and wise men. It was against that tendency, even with the Christians in Corinth, that Paul raged in his first letter; taking something from the Lord Jesus and just putting Him amongst other great and wise men.

The gnostics of Colossae, what were they doing? Oh, they had a theory of angelic ranks and orders, from the highest order of angelic beings down, down, down to the lowest subordinate and they put Jesus, perhaps at the top, but nothing more than an angelic being, robbing Him of His essential person: the very God. The comparative religionists, all along and in our own day, are saying, "Well, there are great, great founders of religion, there's Buddha, and Confucius, and Mohammed, and Jesus, and..." like that. You see the subtlety? Just like that. A comparative; not an absolutely supreme and unique.

And the humanists, those humanists of our time... inflating and glorifying man and humanity to such a point that after all, humanity will be deified one day, will reach Godhead and Jesus is only, after all, the super Man... so it goes on. And it's all these things; this satanic work to reduce the size of Christ, to make Him less than He is, that has done so much mischief.

My point is this, dear friends, that if we lose, if we lose the essential greatness of Christ in our consciousness, or if we fail to have it, ours is going to be a lesser spiritual life than it could be, and we are going to break down under the stress and the strain of adversity. The only thing for every need is this recovery: the recovery of His greatness. Now, here you see He is presented and He is not presented in the language of Deity here, although it runs very close, you at some points cannot distinguish between the humanity and the Deity; you don't know whether John is thinking of God or of Christ at certain points. The fact is he is speaking of the One who is both; who is both. But the title we have already seen, by which He is presented in this matchless, incomparable unveiling is: "Son of Man". The personal greatness, the personal greatness of the Son of Man, who is at the same time Son of God, very God.

We have referred to the letter to the Hebrews and we need to call it in, ask it to come in now for our help in this matter. We read into it, ignoring, ignoring chapter divisions. We begin with this express image of His glory, this effulgence of God in there. We read: "Whom He appointed Heir of all things..." appointed Heir of all things. "Through whom He made the ages..." and on. "But one in a certain place has said, What is man that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou makest mention of him? Thou madest him... to have dominion over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For not yet do we see all under His feet... *But* we behold Jesus... who was made for a little while lower than the angels... that He by the grace of God might taste death in the behalf of every man. Crowned with glory and honour..." Here's the Son of Man; it's His own personal greatness.

See who He is! The effulgence... the express image. See His appointment: Heir of all things! See His instrumentality and agency through whom the angels were made: the Son of Man. How great this One is! You wouldn't think that when you see Him walking about Palestine, not all that, but recognise that that same One is now here before John with these devastating effects. That same One; now revealed, unveiled as to what He is essentially in His person, Who He is, what position He holds; He is here as the Heir of all things come for His inheritance. And the rest of the book sees Him working it out, working it out, the securing of that inheritance of which He is the Heir. And in

the end you have a new earth. What a glorious inheritance comes into view in the last chapters of this book! This, this is the Son of Man; this is His greatness. Oh, but you see we're completely defeated at any attempt at quite a true, not an exaggerated, a true unveiling of Jesus Christ.

There's His personal greatness, but as Son of Man we have in that very term His representative greatness. Borrow again from the letter to the Hebrews where first He is appointed Heir of all things, then He is the captain of their salvation bringing many sons to glory. The word "captain" there would be better translated, "the pioneer" of their salvation; the one who goes before - to lead them into that which He Himself has entered. That's, of course, the substance of the book of the letter to the Hebrews. He has gone before, He has entered into the heavens, He's passed through the heavens. He has gone the whole way and reached the end as the Pioneer of the many sons being brought to glory and those whom He calls His 'brethren'. His representative greatness as there at the end in fullness, in glory, there He represents all those He is going to bring and is bringing - His representative greatness - how great it is!

We sung our hymn; we sing our songs, we read of a great multitude which no man can number out of every tribe and kindred and tongue, thousands, ten thousands of thousands... language is taxed to breaking point to describe the fruit of the sufferings of the Lamb. And He is the representative in glory of them all, of them all. How great is His Person and His representation. And then:-

### **His Official Greatness.**

That is seen in this book and again in the letter to the Hebrews: His official greatness as High Priest. What a great High Priest He is, as according to that book! What a tremendous thing He does. Think of it! Through century after century, sacrifices of lambs, and goats, and bulls, and other things... blood enough to fill an ocean. All through the centuries, day after day... that never reaching an end in effectiveness where sin was concerned, but *He!* One offering, only one, went far beyond the millions of sacrifices on Jewish altars. One only. How great His sacrifice and His priesthood as He offered Himself without spot unto God, once for all.

And here in this book is the other side of His official greatness: His description as King of kings, and Lord of lords. What a thing to say in a day when that tyrant of Rome was dominating the world and assuming lordship over all lordships and seeking to subject every power to himself, not only in earth, but in heaven as the proclaimed deity. In that day, in *that* day the unveiling of Jesus Christ as King of kings - yes, Nero amongst them - and Lord of lords. His official greatness. I am not going to try to add to that, dear friends.

To sum up, I believe we would have a very much better kind of convert if they were presented with a very much greater Christ.

And I would say to anyone who does not know in their own life and experience salvation in Jesus Christ, what it means really to be born again, (use whatever word or phrase or language you like; saved, redeemed, born again whatever) you know what it means to really be a child of God and to know it! To know it, to be able to heartily join in with this apostle John when he said, "Beloved, now are we the children of God... behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and such we are!" *Such we are!* To be able to join in like that and say, "And such we are", with that conscious affirmation of its truth. If that is not where you are, I would say to you, while Jesus would be a Saviour, the forgiver of your sin and many other things to you, He's far, far greater than you can think of, or imagine.

Salvation takes its greatness from the measure of the Saviour. If you want a great salvation, see what a great Saviour He is, and remember, remember, that because of what He is, because of what He is, you need have no fears in putting your trust in Him. You need not fear that you'll (as some people put it) not be able to keep it up; no, you won't, but He will. He'll be able to keep *you* up. Any bit of you He can keep up; He's great enough.

We need a greater unveiling, or an unveiling of the greatness of Jesus Christ to get a better kind of Christian for the recovery of spiritual losses, and declensions, and failure, and deliverance from all these things which are so abhorrent to us and Him. There's only one way, only one way really to see His greatness... if we do that we can't live on a little level. In this matter it will be true, it'll be a tremendously effective thing.

The other day we went to the planetarium in London. Any of you been to that? Well, you've been overwhelmed with amazement, I'm quite sure. But the thing that was with me all the time and afterward as I listened to the little man giving his lecture: how can ever a man be a little man when he's dealing with these things all the time? I suppose it is possible even for a fellow of the Astronomical Society to be a little man, petty man in character (this is not what I'm saying about this man) but it's possible. But it's not possible, it is not possible to have a revelation of the greatness of Jesus Christ and be a little person.

Oh, for our enlargement, our ennoblement, our deliverance from our pettinesses and all this which is so despicable. What is the answer? A new grasp of His greatness. That's all. And then, if we are suffering, if we are knowing adversity, trials, and the clouds seem to be gathering, accumulating and increasing, how will we get through? Only thus, by this: getting away and asking, and seeking, and pursuing in prayer a new heart revelation unveiling of Jesus Christ. And I'm sure that will do it. The Lord give it to us.