



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 1:4-8

“Three Great Imputations: A Cameo of Jesus Christ”

TRANSCRIPT

[AUDIO BEGINS] You didn't say what I was thinking. I thought you were going to say some of them are old and decrepid and need a little help. [Laughter]

[Message] The Scripture reading this morning is found in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation. This is not the beginning of an exposition of the Book of Revelation. But it is the beginning of the Book of Revelation. [Laughter] So, will you listen as I read John's salutation given him to introduce his great revelation of Jesus Christ. The 4th verse,

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto 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, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. (Now, if you have a Bible with marginal notes you immediately notice that that little word “prince” is better rendered by “ruler.” And there is a difference between the prince and the ruler. And this should be ruler. And the ruler of the kings of the earth). Unto him that loved us, (But now again, if you have a Bible with a marginal note or if you have a modern translation, you probably will see that the tense of our text here is past, but the tense of your version or the margin

is present. Unto him that loveth us, or who loves us) and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (And again, some of our ancient manuscripts have the word “washed.” Our most ancient manuscripts and I think probably our better manuscripts have the word “loosed.” Now, the difference is very small between these two. The word to wash in Greek is louo. And the word to loose is luo. And so you can see how a Scribe may have made a mistake at this point in the manuscript tradition. They are actually spelled almost identically, one being l-u-o, the other l-o-u-o. So, there’s just one letter difference. But *luo* wit [Greek indistinct] means to wash; *luo* without means to loose or to free. And again, our most ancient manuscripts, and I think our better manuscripts, read loosed instead of washed. It is true that he has washed us from our sins. It is also true he has loosed us. The meaning is not greatly different. But it should read then), Unto him that loveth us, and hath loosed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

May God bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, we turn again with thanksgiving to Thee for the ministry of the word of God through the Holy Spirit to us. And we thank Thee that as we ponder these words of holy Scripture and what they say concerning Jesus Christ that we have the Holy Spirit to teach us the truth and to convict us of the truth and to bring us to the light of the truth. And we want to thank Thee for that which has been done in the past. And we pray that he may continue his work in our hearts, that we may understand more and more of the wonderful word which Thou hast given us.

We know, Lord, it is not the pages of the book that matter; it is not the ink upon the pages. It is the truth that is enshrined in these pages that is the important thing. But we thank Thee that the word that we have gives us a reliable and infallible picture of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that we can look in the past and be assured that the things of which it speaks are true. And as we look into the future guided by the light of Thy word we know that we are seeing that which shall come to pass upon the earth. Enable us, Lord, as we read the word to, by the Holy Spirit, effectively see it applied to our lives. And when we have made confession of faith in Jesus Christ we pray, oh Lord, that there may be manifested a change. And that as we seek to please Thee that the Holy Spirit may lead us to a more obedient life. May Jesus Christ truly become what he is in this universe, supreme and sovereign in us.

We pray, Lord, that the problems that our lives have may be seen in the light of the word of God and in the light of him. We pray that he will guide us and that when we have difficulties they may be laid at his feet. And give us the faith and the patience to wait for Thy solutions. We pray, oh God, for each one present in this auditorium. And if there is one without Christ, oh Father, give them no rest, nor peace, until they rest in him. We pray. And we pray, Lord, for our country and for its leadership. We pray for the entire church of Jesus Christ. Thou knowest the many needs that the saints have scattered to the four corners of the earth, young and old, black and white, rich and poor, bond and free. Oh God, build us up together in the oneness that we have through Christ and may there be an expression of it through the body for the glory of Jesus Christ. Enable us, Lord, to use the time that we have, it does seem to be short, to glorify Thee. Be with us in the remainder of this service. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for this morning is “A Cameo of Jesus Christ.” We have a friend, my wife and I, who likes his own picture. And some time ago, we visited in the home and we were really amazed to discover how many pictures of himself he had

placed around the house. [Laughter] And the more we saw these pictures, the more we became curious about just how many pictures were in the house. And I am happy to report that my wife was able to make a count [Laughter] and discovered that there were seventeen portraits of the head of the house in the house. [Laughter]

Now, these were of various types, full paintings down to little photographs, snapshots. Of course, if we entered into someone's house and we found this situation, we would naturally comment upon it because it does seem a little bit unusual. If we were to enter into an art gallery and as we went from room to room we should eventually discover that the photographs in the art gallery were all of one person, I think we should be a little surprised by that.

One of the things about the Bible is that wherever you go there is a photograph of Jesus Christ. Whatever book you take up in the Bible, whether it be Genesis or Revelation or Romans or even the Book of Ecclesiastes, still it speaks of Jesus Christ. In fact, our Lord himself is the authority for that. For he said to the Jewish men of his day, “Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think that ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

Now, my friend whom I love very much in the Lord, I think has one quirk. And that is he likes to see his own picture in his house. But we do not think that Jesus Christ is strange when he tells us that all of the Scriptures speak of him and that we may expect to find him in all of the Scriptures. Somehow or other, deep down within in we say within ourselves even those who are not Jesus Christ's friends, particularly, that this is right.

Now, that is the testimony of the Holy Spirit who testifies to the fact that it is right that all of the Scriptures should speak of him. The Book of Revelation contains a sketch of Jesus Christ. And the passage that I have read is a brief cameo of that sketch. But in the Book of Revelation we have a picture of the Messiah's ascended life in heaven primarily. It is the continuation of his incarnate life and the continuation of the prophetic

stories or prophesies of the Old Testament of him. And one of the author's of Scripture has said, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” So, what we have in Revelation is really the continuation of what the entire Bible contains. But he is seen in Revelation as the overseer of the local church. And he himself calls attention to that when, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, he describes himself as “the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”

Now, he has told us in the preceding chapter that the lampstands represent the churches. And so, Jesus Christ is the overseer of the local church. He walks in the midst of the churches that meet in his name. And I do not think that we are being boastful or that we are braggarts if we should say that it is our conviction that Jesus Christ is in the midst of this congregation of people. That is his claim.

When you turn to the 4th chapter of the Book of Revelation you notice that immediately the Lamb receives from the hand of the one who sits on the throne a little book written within and without sealed with seven seals. And the Lamb takes that book and throughout the chapters through the 20th chapter and about the 15th verse or the 11th or 10th verse he opens the seals, he blows the trumpets, the vials are opened or the bowls are poured out and we see that what we have is a beautiful picture ahead of time of how Jesus Christ is going to assume authority and rule over the whole of the earth. And so, he is the supervisor of human affairs and the one who shall bring in the kingdom of God. As he said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” And he is exercising that power today.

And then finally in the 20th chapter and the 11th through the 15th verses he is described. There is the ultimate judge of men. For all men shall finally come to the great white throne judgment. And that includes all of us in this room who are not Christians. We shall all stand before that judgment and we shall ultimately be “cast,” John says, “into the lake of fire,” if we are not believers. As Paul put it, “He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;

whereof he hath given assurance in that he hath raised him from the dead.” And the resurrection is the assurance that these things shall take place.

Now, John was called by Jesus, Boanerges, or he and James were called Boanerges. He called Peter the Rock. He said, “Your name is Simon. I’m going to make you a rock.” And when you look at Peter’s character as set forth in the gospels, you would never come to the conviction that Peter was much of a rock. Well, maybe he gave him that name because he would become a rock personally. There are some later stories of the New Testament which suggest that Peter did become that type of character, but it is probable that he was speaking of Peter as the one who would utter the words that are the foundation of the church that point to Jesus Christ as the rock. And Peter was called the foundation because of his place in the forming of the church. I am, myself, I feel that the reason that John is called Boanerges, which means a son of thunder, is not because he had a short fuse, though there is evidence of that. He and James apparently wanted to call down fire from heaven on some who were not too responsive to the word. I have felt that way myself often. [Laughter] And it is possible that he was called son of thunder for that reason, but I’m more inclined to think that he was called son of thunder because our Lord knew when he called John to be his apostle that his witness would be as mighty as thunder. And if that is true, then it is the Book of Revelation to which he was ultimately pointing because his witness, John’s witness, in this great Book of Revelation is as mighty as thunder.

Now, we’re going to see these particular things, which I would call colors, emerge from this little cameo that we are going to talk about. And so, let’s come quickly now to the salutation. I want to spend our time this morning on that. And then, since I have about three more Sundays before I leave for North Carolina and draw up my rocking chair and put my feet on the banisters of our family home there and rest for about a month, I want to speak on next Sunday and the two following on three great theological passages

of the New Testament. But this morning we want to center our attention upon the person and work of our Lord.

Now, in this little salutation to the Book of Revelation which we have read we notice that Jesus Christ is presented in three ways. First, who he is. Second, what he has done. And third, what he shall do. And let's look at it in that way.

Now, John is giving us a salutation which is the beginning of his book. And so, he begins by mentioning himself. “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: (Now the salutation comes from the three members of the trinity) Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

Now, I would like to talk for a few moments about this because there are some interesting things in the original text at this point. But I just want to say this and then pass on. It is obvious that this expression that John uses has become something of a title. “Him which is, which was, which is to come.” It was John's way of referring to the eternal Father, to the eternal God.

Now, the Greek's like to speak of Zeus who was, Zeus who is and Zeus who will be. And so John, right here at the beginning, is giving a side glance at the beliefs of the men of his day and suggesting to them that it is not Zeus who is, Zeus who was and Zeus who will be. But it is Jehovah, the Jehovah who is, who was and who is to come.

Now, as you know throughout this book he will allude to the beliefs of the men of his day. He will point out, for example, that while Domitian in Rome likes to be called King of Kings and Lord of Lords and even had himself in John's day proclaimed God the Lord over and over again in the presence of the poets Martial and Statius. Still, it is our Lord who is really King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And so, here the benediction comes from the Father who in contrast to Zeus, who is simply a passing idol, he is the one who really is, who really was and who really is to come. And then secondly he says the benediction “comes from the seven Spirits which are before the throne.”

Now, the Book of Revelation is written in a great deal of symbolic language. And it is obvious that there are not seven holy spirits in heaven. And John himself would be authority in his gospel and epistles for that truth. The other apostles would buttress him in this that there is one Holy Spirit of God. But this one Holy Spirit of God has innumerable ministries to men. And we may symbolically speak of them as a sevenfold ministry. For to them, seven was the number of perfection. And to speak of seven spirits which come from the throne of God was simply to refer to the Holy Spirit and the way in which he manifests in completeness and perfection his ministry toward men. And finally, he comes in the third of the sources of his benediction to Jesus Christ and from Jesus Christ.

Now here, of course, is the beginning of what I want to say to you. Because here John begins the description of who he is.

“From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness (That’s what he was in the past), and the first begotten of the dead (That’s what he is in the present, as John writes), and the prince of the kings of the earth, the ruler of the kings of the earth (That’s what he shall be in the future).”

Now, let’s look for a moment at these three things. Who is the faithful witness? In the Old Testament our Lord is presented as the prophet, as the priest and as the King. He is said to be the prophet who shall come and give us a true word about God. And I think of the prophecy, the great prophecy in Deuteronomy chapter 18 in which God spoke to Moses. And he said to Moses, “Moses, there’s going to come a prophet after you who is going to be like you and he is going to come from among your brethren. But he is going to be a different kind of prophet for he is going to be a person into whose mouth I will put my words in the absolute sense. And further, unto him the people shall hearken.”

And this is the first of, and I think the greatest of the prophecies concerning the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ. “I will put my words in his mouth.”

Now, when our Lord was here he testified accordingly. He said, for example, in the presence of Pilate when Pilate asked him was he really a king, he said,

“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. And Pilate said unto him, Art thou a king then? And Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

And Jesus Christ came as the one into whose mouth God had put his words. He came to testify to the truth and even said himself that he was the way, the truth and the life and that no man could come under the Father but by him. So, he is the one into whose mouth God has put his words.

And my dear friends we could never be sure of any word from God if we did not have it from God himself. And that is why Jesus Christ's deity is one of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith. That's why John says, “These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” For it isn't enough to hear a message from a man like me assuming that I were guided by the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Still, my words are fallible words in the final analysis. And I could make a mistake. And even if I were a prophet giving you a message from God, sooner or later I would demonstrate that I was just a fallible man. We must have a word from God himself. And that is why it is necessary for the Son of God to come and to speak to us as God himself.

Now that we have heard Jesus Christ, we know that the truth which he proclaimed and which he authenticated in the Scriptures is the truth. And so that is why we must

have a word from God and why Jesus Christ, since he has come, must be God. He is the faithful witness.

Now, if you look at his testimony you can see why John should say “He is the faithful witness.” Just take, for example, his three great sermons. The first, the Sermon on the Mount. No man ever took the Old Testament and interpreted it as our Lord Jesus Christ did. The prophets of the Old Testament give us interpretations of parts of the Old Testament; they take certain sections of Deuteronomy and explain them to us, such as the Prophet Isaiah has done. But no man ever gave us an authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament like our Lord did. And no one ever gave us an interpretation which meant more to the heart of the teaching of the word than our Lord did. And when men listened to him, they said, “This man doesn’t teach like other men. He’s not like the Scribes and the Pharisees. This man teaches with authority.” And when men listened to him they knew that this voice was not the voice of an ordinary man. He looked over the Mosaic Law and he gave us its essential meaning. And we learn from that that he is the Lord of history. Then, on the sermon that he gave us on Olivet. There he did not look into the past, but he looked into the future. And those great principles that are found within that great prophetic message have been fulfilled over and over and over again in human history. And even if there was not an ultimate fulfillment of them in literal detail, we should know that he had an insight into the future that no man ever has had. But we also know that there is coming a time when all of those words shall be fulfilled. He is not only the Lord of history; he is the Lord of prophecy. And then in his third great discourse, his Upper Room discourse, in which he prepared the apostles for the days when he would not be here.

Again, the insight that our Lord had into spiritual things and in the wonderful revelation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit contained within gives us the deep conviction in our hearts that he is the Lord of the church. No man ever spoke like Jesus Christ. And it’s no wonder then that the officers who were sent to take him captive when they

reported back and were criticized because they had not brought him, they gave the simple answer, “Never man spake like this man.”

No one has ever yet discovered a word that Jesus ought to have said. Can you think of any thing that Jesus Christ ought to have said that he did not say? I think that's a fair question and a challenge to any who think that Jesus Christ was only a man. If you think he was just as we are, then what ought Jesus Christ to have said that he did not say? If you think that Jesus Christ is only a man as other men, no greater than our greatest men, then can you suggest something that he should have said in a better way than he said it? Can you give me one or two suggestions? Would you like to improve upon the language of our Lord? You know, that's an impossible thing, though you be a Euripides, or a Shakespeare or an Escalus, you cannot improve upon the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. “He is the faithful witness.” No action of his has ever shocked our moral sense. None has fallen short of the ideal. He is full of surprises, but they are the surprises of perfection.

Now, that's enough for a sermon in itself, isn't it? John doesn't stop there. He says, “And he's the first begotten from the dead.”

Now, first begotten does not mean firstborn. This term is a term that means sovereignty. He is sovereign over those who have come from the dead. He is the first begotten in the sense that he is the first to concur death. You see, our Lord Jesus was crucified on Friday. His body was taken down. His spirit left his body. His body was lifeless. It was placed in the grave just as other men. And the time is coming, my dear friend, when your body too, if Jesus Christ does not come, the spirit shall leave it, the body shall be lifeless, the eyes shall be closed, the ears shall be deaf, the mouth shall be dumb, the limbs shall be like the limbs of those who have the palsy. Your body shall be put in a sepulcher, placed in the ground and the dirt shall be shoveled over your casket. But Jesus Christ's case was different. On the first day of the week suddenly the eyes that were lifeless saw again, the ears heard again, the mouth was able to speak again. Not

only were the limbs able to move again, but the body was a beautiful glorified body such as no human being has ever possessed even to the present day. He overcame death. And no life ever overcomes death, but the life of Jesus Christ. And if we do not have that life, we shall not overcome death. That’s why our Lord said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” We who have his life, that life alone overcomes death. “He’s the first begotten from the dead,” supreme over the faithful, whom he shall bring to life as well.

Now, last week I was preaching in Memphis two or three times a day in the First Evangelical Church. I left Sunday afternoon after I spoke here and went up there and spoke Sunday night and then through the week. And on one of the nights, I spoke on our Lord walking on the water. And my point really was that Peter was able to walk on the water. And I labored that point I thought rather well. And in fact, I thought when I finished I had given a relatively good message. I was rather pleased with myself that I had thoroughly expounded that passage.

Now, you think that that’s strange. But preachers are just human, you know? We sometimes think we do a good job. And I thought I had pretty well exhausted that passage. And the very next morning the other preacher got up and said something about that passage that I had not only not said, “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon,” I hadn’t even thought about it. [Laughter] And he made this point. I had made a great deal over the fact that not only did Jesus walk on the water, but Peter walked on the water.

Now, that’s the most amazing miracle of that incident. I still say that. That’s the most amazing thing that Peter walked on the water. That’s the miracle. And as the man stood up the next morning he commented on the message. He didn’t even say it was a good message. But he did [Laughter] comment on the message and he said, “Dr. Johnson spoke last night or yesterday on Peter’s walking on the water.” And then he said this. “Did you notice this? That Peter was able to walk on the water as long as he kept his eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ.” I had made that point. And he said, “When Peter’s eyes

strayed from our Lord’s eyes to the boisterous winds that were about, then Peter began to sink.” And I had made that point. But then he said, “Do you know that Jesus Christ is able to walk on the water whether he keeps his eyes on Peter or on the winds or on anything else?” You see, he’s different. And even when Peter walks on the water, our Lord’s walking on the water is of a different kind. It’s sovereign walking on the water because of what he is in himself. Not because he draws virtue from some one else as in Peter’s case. “He’s the first begotten from the dead.”

Now, it says for who he is in the future, “And the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Not simply the prince, but the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Now, I like Prince Charlie. I don’t have anything against him. I am looking forward to the day when he shall become King Charles. I read an article the other day that disturbed me a little bit. It suggested that perhaps King Charles would never really become King Charles. In the first place, if Queen Elizabeth wants to reign as long as she wants to reign and if she reigns as long as some of the other females have reigned in the line, the chances are he may not be able to come to the throne at all. And especially since by the time he gets there, there may not even be any royalty.

Now, he is Prince Charles, but he doesn’t have a great deal of authority. And so, it isn’t enough to be “the prince of the kings of the earth.” Our Lord is not simply that. “He is the ruler of the kings of the earth.” It is they who acknowledge his sovereignty. And as the Old Testament and the New Testament combined teach in the final days when the kings of this earth are engaged in rebellion against the throne of heaven and say, “Let us break their bands asunder. We don’t want any Lord and Messiah over us.” It is then that Jesus Christ comes again. And we read that “The kings of the earth then want to hide themselves under the rocks and in the caves from the face of the Lamb who sits upon the throne.” “He is the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

Now that’s who he is. He’s surely great. And if we had time, that’s what we ought to sing. “How Great Thou Art.” But now, John has more to tell us. He wants to

tell us what he has done. And so he says in verse 5, the second sentence, “Unto him that loveth us, and hath loosed us from our sins in his own blood.”

Now, you’ll notice this about apostles. They’re strange people. He’s hardly begun, but the mention of the name of Jesus Christ has already fired his heart. It’s an apostolic disease. Whenever they get to talking about Jesus Christ they begin to speak in terms of doxology.

Now, you want to wait until the end, it seems to me, to give a doxology. But right here in the beginning of the book he’s hardly gotten started. He’s given us just the salutation and he’s already speaking about him, about him, him. And he wants to utter this praise. It’s like someone has said like a fountain within his heart that springs up to be due the whole of heavens. Unto him.

By the way, you will notice that John is a man with a firsthand knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It’s him. He’s not a myth. He’s not a character upon a piece of paper. He’s not an historical personage alone, but he’s a living person. And notice too, John does not say “Now unto his great love,” but it’s “Unto him.” It’s not even “Now unto the love of God.” And it surely is not “Now unto the doctrine of the love of God.”

Theologians are absolutely necessary and I’m going to begin the message next week by pointing out how important theology is. We couldn’t live without it. But you know, theologians have a happy faculty at times of so crystallizing the truth, so objectivising it, that it becomes simply a truth. That’s all. John never lapses into that only. So, it’s “Unto him.” And notice it’s what he has done in the present, what he has done in the past, what he has done in the past, present and future. He says, “Unto him that loveth us.” Loveth.

Samuel Tregelles is one of the great Greek scholars of Britain. And he once was reading the New Testament and he discovered that this verb loveth was in the present tense. He had had the English version before him for a long time and he thought it was in the past tense. But as he looked at his Greek text, he saw that some of the ancient

manuscripts, and the better ones, had it in the present tense. So, he took his concordance down and he looked up the Greek verb *agapao* and he discovered that this is the only place in the whole of the New Testament where the Greek verb *agapao*, to love, is used of Christ's love for us in the present tense. It's the only place in which it is stated Jesus Christ loves us. Present, continually, with the use of that verb. And he put down his pen and he said, “If I've only discovered one thing by the study of Greek,” and he learned Greek by himself becoming a great scholar, “If I've only discovered one thing to discover that the love of Jesus Christ is a perpetual enduring present love to me has been worth all the perspiration of the study of Greek.” Unto him that loveth us.

Mr. Spurgeon was once calling on a friend of his and he noticed that over his house he had a weather vane and on this weather vane which moved with the wind were the words “God is Love.” And he said to the man, he said, “Why did you do that? Do you mean by that that God's love is changeable, going with the wind?” He said, “Oh no, Mr. Spurgeon. I mean whichever way the wind blows God is still love.” And whichever way the wind blows for a Christian Jesus Christ's love for us is constant. It never fails. By the way, he doesn't tell us who this him is. If you were listening to an ordinary person, you might say, “Wait a minute. Who is him? Is that your father unto him that loveth us? Is that your mother unto him that loveth us? Or, John, do you mean your brother James unto him that loveth us?” Or someone might say, “Isn't that the Virgin Mary?” But there's no question. Everybody knows whom he's speaking about, though he doesn't have to name him because there is no one who loves like Jesus Christ.

Now, he says, “He has loved us and he has loosed us.” That's what he's done in the past. That is, he has freed us from sin. And it is at the cost of his blood. Mr. Nule said the loosing was once and for all, but the loving goes on forever.

Now, that means of course that we are safe and secure. There is an authentic story told of an aged minister which I like because I'm getting to that stage. And he had preached with a great deal of power and clarity through all of his life. But in the latter

stages of his life he found himself, particularly when he was suffering physically, beset with doubts and sometimes even despair. And one day he was having these problems and he was wondering “Am I really a Christian?” And he mentioned it to his wife and she quickly turned his attention to John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” And he burst out into a happy laugh and said, “To think that I should ever forget those words that I’ve often preached on.” And sometime later she happened to come into his room suddenly and she found him leaning over the bed with his hand under the bed and he was just pulling out the hand and he had a book in it. She said, “What in the world are you doing?” And he said, “Well, Satan’s been after me again.” And he said, “Since in the Bible it says that he’s the prince of darkness I thought if he was anywhere in this room he was going to be under the bed and I was just showing him John 5:24 a minute ago [Laughter] and the minute I showed him John 5:24 he left me.” [Laughter] And do you know really that is the secret of the sense of assurance that we have. It’s through the word of God.

Now, he says that “He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” He has made us. And he has made us kings. We are going to reign. But he has made us priests now. And I want to say a word about that because you know I don’t think we realize what it means to be a priest.

Now, if you had been a Jew, at that point you would probably have stopped and you would have said to your friend, “To think that I, whom of the Tribe of Benjamin, why I’m a priest.” Because you see, only a member of the Tribe of Levi could be a priest. And in the temple in our Lord’s day, if you went into the temple, there was a court for the gentiles and there you gentiles would have to stop. Then there was a court for the women. And if you were a woman, and even though you were an Israelite, it was there that you could go. You could not go beyond it. They had some admirable things in those days. But anyway, there was another court. And the next court was the court of

the Israelite. And so if you were an Israelite, then you could go through the court of the gentiles, you could move on through the court of the women and you could move into the court of the Israelites, but the court of the priests, which was beyond, you could not enter. And if you were a priest, why you could pass with a great deal of [indistinct] through the first, through the second, through the third, on into the court of the priests and then you could go no further. You see, the Old Testament says over and over again there are barriers to the presence of God, barriers to the presence of God because of sin. This was its way of teaching us by illustration.

Now, only the high priests could go beyond into the very holiest of all. And there for the people representing them, he could enter in this typical way the presence of God. But since Jesus Christ has come we who are believers, whether we be Jewish believers or gentile believers, whether we be male or female, bond or free, black or white, we can enter through the court of the gentiles, through the court of the Israelites, through the court of the women, through the court of the priests, into the very presence of God.

Now, my Christian friend, did you use that privilege this last week? Did you enter the presence of God and have a few words with him? We are priests of the most high God. And we have the access that the high priests had in the Old Testament. I want to tell you, that's wonderful. And did you notice that John doesn't have any doubts about these things. He doesn't say "Unto him that we hope has loved us and that we humbly trust has washed us and that we sometimes believe has made us kings and priests."

Now, it's all very definite. He's not being proud or boastful, he's just believing the word of God.

Now, what he shall do. I've always thought that adoration awakes expectation. And I see it here. For he says, "Behold, he cometh with clouds."

Now, behold is a little word that says look. And I've often said this to you. But I have a very bad habit. I don't read a book these days without underlining.

Now, I read the newspapers. I don't underline the newspapers. But almost everything else I underline. And I carry this with me. I am thinking about putting a little note in my will that when I'm buried they be sure and bury a ruler with me. [Laughter] And I think also I will have a white button down shirt. That's why I cannot succumb to the custom of the time and I was thinking about telling someone that perhaps I ought to be buried in a white button down shirt so the Lord would be sure to know me. [Laughter] But seriously, I do have this little ruler and I have a red pencil and I underline in a system. The things that I think are fairly important I underline with the red pencil. Then, if it's a little more important than the ordinary I'll put a little vertical line in the column on the right-hand side or the left-hand side. But if it's really important, something I may want to take out of what I'm reading and eventually pass it on to you, I will underline it, draw the vertical line and then put NB in the margin, which is the abbreviation, of course, of the Latin phrase or clause *nota bene*, note well.

Now, in the Bible they don't write like that, which means that my principles are unscriptural I have to presume. [Laughter] But they did use other terms. They said “behold,” look, look, this is something important, *nota bene*. “Behold, he cometh with clouds.” And did you notice it is put in the present tense. Why, it's almost as if he's on the way. They are so excited, these biblical writers that over and over again they speak of the second coming not in that abstruse kind of way, but in the present tense.

Now, let me illustrate. Suppose you were a mother who had a son in Vietnam that has been flying helicopters in missions over a territory where they were being fired at day after day, you wouldn't be very peaceful most of the time. You would be praying most of the time if you were a Christian. And then suppose on Saturday afternoon after your husband has cut the grass and edged and is sitting down in his chair trying to recuperate the phone rings. And you go in to get the phone and it's a long distance call. And it's a long distance call from Vietnam, from Saigon. And it's John. And he says, “Hello mother. Got some good news for you. I'm leaving on Tuesday. I'm now in

Saigon. I'm out of the area. No one's shooting bullets at me anymore and I'm leaving on Tuesday. I fly to Hawaii. I'll be there a couple of days and I'm getting home on the 18th of June. And so tell Daddy I will arrive on the 18th.” And so what does she do? She puts the phone down and she goes back and she walks out on the patio and she says, “I have something to say to you dear. I just received a communication from Vietnam and our son has said that he will be free on next Tuesday. He will be flying to Hawaii and on the 18th he will arrive home.” She doesn't say that at all. She goes to the back door; she throws it open, she says, “John's coming home.” Because you see, she is so thrilled with it that it's as if he's on the way. “John's coming.” And that's what we read in the Bible, you see. “Look, he's coming. And he's coming with clouds. And he's coming in great glory and every eye shall see him.”

Now, this is not only then a prophecy, but it is a vivid picture. And there is no perhaps about it. Our Lord is no dallying Dagwood late for work in heaven who's going to dash out at the last moment, you know, and catch the last bus to arrive in time. No, this is all going according to program. And when the time comes he's going to come. “He dwells in the leisure of eternity and in the serenity of omnipotence,” Mr. Spurgeon has said. And he'll come.

Now, there is an authentication for all of this. For after having said “Even so, Amen,” then John says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega (he's referring to the Father, I think), the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Three great descriptions of God from the Old Testament that describe who he is. “He's the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the eternal one.” Then, “He is also the one who is, who was and who is to come.” Another of the text to speak of him as the eternal one. And he's the Almighty.

Now, if you have your Greek testament before you, you people who've been sitting in Mr. [name indistinct] classes, they're growing by leaps and bounds. The other day, believe it or not, a little twelve year old has expressed a desire to learn Greek and so

we are having people study Greek from the time of junior high on. This place is going to be full of Greek scholars before long. But if you have a Greek text before you, you will notice that the term almighty is built upon two roots which mean the one who has his hand upon everything.

Now, that idea is still in that word, the almighty. And because he is the Alpha and the Omega, because he is the Lord which is and which was and which is to come, because he is the Almighty one, we can be sure that these words are true. Archimedes said, “Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth.” And the fulcrum, which is going to move the earth, is the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May I say this in conclusion? First a word to you who may be here who are not believers. His coming is glorious or his own. But it is a tragedy for those who have not believed. All the harp of the final despairing cry of the lost. We may now thrust Jesus Christ from our minds. We may spurn his loving appeals. We may detour around the companies of the redeemed who meet to worship him. But every eye shall see him and every knee shall ultimately bow to him. And so I say to you as an ambassador of Jesus Christ give him the glory. John said “Unto him be the glory.” Give him the glory of trusting in him.

And then if I may, I'd like to say a final word to you who are believers. Although why I must appeal to you I do not know. Why should anyone have to appeal to a believer who believes these things about Jesus Christ to have him as the Lord of their lives? Why should I have to appeal to you to offer to him the hosannas, the hallelujahs and the worshipful obedience that is his if you believe in him? My dear friends it is one of the testimonies to the continuation of the power of sin in our lives that men who say that Jesus Christ is all of these things must nevertheless be appealed to by the Holy Spirit to give him all that we are. And so I say to you, to the one I say “Unto Him be the glory.” Give him the glory of trusting in him. But as John said “Unto Him be glory and dominion,” give him the dominion in your life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We stand amazed, Lord, in the presence of these great truths concerning the Lord of glory. And oh, Father, it is a testimony to our sin that Thou shouldst have to appeal to us to render to Thee what is Thine by right and title. That Thou shouldst have to appeal to us to submit to Jesus Christ when he has so won us by his love. And we pray that the gratitude of our hearts may grow and deepen as we ponder what it means to belong to him. Oh Father, may we truly experience the fulfillment of John’s great petition within our hearts unto him be...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]