



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 1:9-20

"Christ Amid the Candlesticks"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning for our Scripture reading this morning to chapter 1 verse 9 through verse 20, which as those of you who have read the apocalypse know this is John's vision of Christ. In the 9th verse, the apostle writes,

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Incidentally, that does not mean that he was there to preach or to give testimony, though that is undoubtedly what he did. It means he was there because of what he had been doing, preaching and giving testimony, and so he was there in exile. The "for" mean on account of. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying" these opening words of the King James Version are probably not genuine although they represent truth. And later on one of the expressions is found in the intro to one of the letters to the churches. But the Greek text probably says at this point, and by when I say probably I mean the manuscript for these opening

words is not sufficient enough to say that's what John wrote here, the text probably reads as he wrote it saying,

"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps," (or the breast) "with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead;"

Literally became dead, and obviously the sense is he became dead for a time. "And, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In the original text those are reversed, as you might expect, because death precedes the hell or the Hades. So we should think of this, "and have the keys of death and of Hades".

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

I will not try to expound those last two verses in this message today but later on probably in the next message I will give a word of explanation about this command that is given to the apostle. There's one thing I think it might be helpful for me to say right at this point rather than during the message. The Book of Revelation is a book filled with symbolic teaching, symbolic revelation. In fact, as John says in the very first verse, " he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John!" That terms was used in ancient times, for example, Heraclitus uses it in the sense of not open and clear language nor concealed language, but language by symbol, teaching by symbol. So we should think of that as we look at the various symbols that are found in the Book of Revelation.

One might as how may we interpret the symbols of the book? Well I'll just give you a little clue so you can start practicing this yourself as you read the book. One of the things that will help you, and most obviously, is as your read through the book you will notice a lot of the things are interpreted by John. And then secondly, this book is filled with phrases and clauses from the Old Testament. And therefore, the most obvious way to interpret those passages that are not interpreted for us is to look at the Old Testament context of those phrases and clauses and see the sense in which the apostle, remember when we say the apostle we're talking about what he wrote, the revelation was given him by the Lord Jesus Christ who in turn received it from the Father.

But the Old Testament will be the greatest source of help in interpreting the symbolic in the Book of Revelation. There are, however, a few places in the book where knowledge of local customs at the time of the apostle will be of help to you in understanding this book. But if you will just keep those things in mind, the Old Testament is the preeminent source of the symbols forty the book. Secondly, you'll notice those particular passages that are interpreted by the book itself, or by our Lord through John himself. And finally, a few scattered places where knowledge of local customs and culture will be helpful. In that sense you will have a step beyond others in reading and

understanding this great book. May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's now turn to the Lord in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to thee for this magnificent apocalypse or unveiling of Jesus Christ. What a magnificent climax it makes to the word of God and how appropriate it is to read of him as the great judge who is to come in his Second Advent and set things right in our human society. We are grateful and thankful for the view that we have of the future. Lord help us as we ponder these words to understand them and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit to apply them to our own lives. We thank thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ, for all who have believed in him have truly rested themselves upon the bloodshed on Calvary's cross for their eternal redemption.

O God, bless each one of them. Minister to each member of the body of Christ through the word of God and through the experiences of life as thou doest bring them to us. We pray for this local church and its leadership, our elders, and our deacons, we pray for the members, and friends, and the visitors who are here with us today. Lord undertake for each one and give each one of us a sense of thy personal presence in our lives through Christ's atoning work. We praise thee for the cross on which he died and offered the propitiation, the satisfaction of the claims of heaven against us who are sinners. How wonderful it is to know they have been met by our Lord and we have been by grace through faith in him made righteous, declared righteous before the throne of God.

We worship thee Lord and praise Thee for the goodness thou hast shown to us. Bless the whole church. Bless this country in which we live. Give wisdom and guidance to those that have the rule over us, in Washington, in the states, and in the cities. We pray Lord that Thou wilt minister through these ministers to us. We pray for the sick, we especially remember them, and those that have requested our prayers, be with them. Bless those who minister to them. Give them wisdom and guidance and for their family and friends and concerned ones, oh God minister to them also. Be with us at our service.

May our Lord Jesus Christ be lifted up as we sing and hear the word of God for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] It's probably true to say that almost everyone in this room has at one time or another wished to know the appearance, the physical appearance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The evidence of that is the many pictures that we know of him. You have seen, of course, pictures of his face. Some are very famous found in many Christian homes and found in some none Christian homes as well. You have seen pictures of a praying Christ, that too is very popular representation of our Lord. You've seen him as a shepherd with lambs representative of his work as the great shepherd of the sheep. You have seen him knocking on a door in Holman Hunts' great picture. The handle of the door being on the inside with the message, it must be opened from within.

Some years ago I saw in a magazine or else received through the mail Chinese photographer's representation of the snow. It could have been taken last weekend. As you look at it it looks just like ground partially covered by snow. Well he was a non-Christian so the description of this said, "He looked at it. And as he looked at it and continued to look at it suddenly there emerged the face of Christ in the snow." This is not ordinarily the way that people get converted but, in his case, it made such an impression upon him that, as a result of what he saw, felt that that was a message from God for him and he was converted.

Christian ought to be interested in what Christ did look like, but unfortunately, we do not really have any way of knowing. We know in general what Jewish men at the time may have looked like. But as far as he is concerned we really have no definite information concerning the way in which he looked. There are some statements that give us some inkling of what he must of looked like, but we really don't know. We ought to be interested, of course, in what he looked like. As a matter of fact if we knew certain things about him, even if they might seem strange to us, they would still be important. For

example, if instead of having beautiful gray hair like mine, he had had red hair then that would be of interest to us.

And if, for example, he walked with a limp that would have been of interest to us. And if he had as someone has put it, a curious trick with his hand when speaking in public, as some of us preachers do have, that would have been interesting us as well. It may not have been important, but it would have been interesting to us, and important in its limited sense for us because the Christian revelation is an historical revelation. And therefore, a Christian should never take the viewpoint that we're not interesting in history, we are interested simply the spiritual meaning of the ministry of our Lord. We are interested. We ought to be interested in everything that is truly historical in the Christian faith. And we should be prepared, of course, to defend it if necessary. It's helpful to remember that. And so it's not a sense of something unimportant to wonder how Christ looked physically.

Now, the picture that John gives us here is not a picture of a physical description of our Lord, is a symbolic and spiritual vision of our Lord. It's a frontispiece to the whole book, in a sense, giving us a symbolic picture of the one who will be an emperor over the whole of the earth. And in that sense it's important for us, but it's also important on a practical level because John received his message in the days of Domitian, that wicked Roman emperor. The one who loved to have himself called "our Lord and our God." And so consequently, it would have been a comfort amidst the upheavals of the days of Domitian and the persecution of the Christian faith to have this magnificent picture of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostle John in his last days.

Now, the section we are looking at may be divided into a prelude to the vision in verse 9 through verse 11, then the portrait of the risen Christ in verse 12 through verse 16. And finally, the pronouncement that the risen Christ made to the Apostle John upon the occasion of the vision. The apostle says in the 9th verse that he was in the isle that this called Patmos. Patmos was one of the four of these islands on the west of Asia Minor and

coast. It was about ten miles long and five miles wide and shaped like a crescent and the points of the crescent faced east toward Asia Minor. Not far from Ephesus, about forty miles I believe. So, therefore, on the trip to Rome, that was the first stop of a boat and on the trip from Rome to Ephesus it was usually the last stop. Patmos had a lovely harbor, a very good harbor and so it was a commonly known island. When men were exiled politically, they frequently were exiled to the island of Patmos. There they did not particularly suffer, but they had to live as an exile

In the case of religious exiles, as the apostle was for he said he was there on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, they often were required to work in the quarries and so it was not a very pleasant experience. You can imagine the apostle living out those days working from morning until night and in physical labor. There's one important thing to keep in mind. That little island is surrounded by the Aegean Sea and so consequently the sights and sounds of the open sea were constantly in the ears of the Apostle John. It's not surprising that there are many places in this book where the sea is significant for the revelation.

Now, he says he was in the isle called Patmos and many people could have identified with him. It's almost as if he were saying, as Ezekiel said when he came to those who were in captivity in Tel Aviv by the River Chebar. And he says that, "I sat where they sat." It's John's way of telling us that he has gone to the university of Christian experience in suffering. As he puts it, "he's your brother, companion, in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." So on the human level he's in Patmos suffering on account of his Christian testimony. But in another level, as he says in the 10th verse, he is in the spirit. One is his visible environment. The other is his invisible environment. He is in Patmos, but he is also in the spirit.

We all know from reading Paul's Epistles, that he frequently writes to the Saints who are in Christ and in Colossae. And John has a similar experience. As a matter of fact,

we all have that don't we? We are in Christ if we are believers in him and at the same time we are in Dallas. So we have two environments. It's helpful to remember that.

He says also that he was in the spirit on the Lord's Day. That could be taken as, and some have indeed taken it, as a reference to the day of the Lord. It's, however, unlikely. He probably is referring to the first day of the week, our Sunday. The Didache, an early Christian document that would support that, but at any rate that's the likely meaning of it. The other meaning, if that is that he intended is true to the book for the book is largely an unfolding of events that have to do with the day of the Lord, that is the great future prophetic day when God's judgments are poured upon the earth. We're going to take it simply as a reference to the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, but the other sense is perfectly harmonious with what the Bible teaches.

Now, John says that when he was there he heard behind him a great voice like the voice of a trumpet. And the voice of the trumpet called upon him to write what he saw in a book and send the message to seven churches. We commented upon the fact that these seven churches, because there were seven, while real churches were also probably designed to be symbolic of the church as a whole, representing the different aspects of a local church then and a local church now. Many of our churches bear all of the characteristics. In other words, there are characteristics of Ephesus, and Sardus, and Laodicea, in most of the gatherings of the Saints. That will be important, we'll try to unfold that as we go along. So now have the vision before us and we are to remember the symbolic character of the book. John is giving these things in symbolic form. He is as we said, "signifying them"

Now, I know people like to think that, "Well, that's what a popular Bible teacher might say." But surprisingly scholars too acknowledge that that is a good representation of the truth of the meaning of the verb *semaino*. As I mentioned, Heraclitus uses this word, others use the word too in the sense of to communicate by symbols. So not openly and not darkly, but by symbol. So this is the way he's going to communicate to us.

Now, I want to warn you, you should not seek too much symbolism but you must be sure to see the symbolism that is there. We don't want to see too much and be like the individual trying to be a little critical of people who do that, who said, "Wonderful things in the Bible I see, things that are put there by you and by me." That is very common. That's very common doctrinally as well as very common in passages such as this. So we're going to see it as symbolic, but we're going to remember there's a great deal of literal truth unfolded here, as well.

Now, there is seven things that are mentioned by John in the description of the body of our Lord. The very fact that there are seven, as most of the commentators have set forth, indicates that this is to be regarded primarily as a symbolic representation of our Lord. Many years ago H. A. Ironside, I don't know what day he wrote in his book or whether he just gave this as an illustration, I heard him expound this book, I may have gotten it from that. But at any rate he said that when he was a young boy, and he grew up in a family that was a godly family, he was trying to draw a picture of Jesus Christ as he thought of him and he used this particular representation of him as his model. He said, "I have a lot of difficulty with this sword, this two-edged sword that was in his mouth. And finally I took it to my father and he looked at it and he said, 'Why did you make his tongue so long?'" He's just trying to express the fact that it's very difficult to transfer this into a physical representation.

Now, you will notice that he begins by saying he was, "Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about his breast with a golden girdle." We don't have to talk about the details of this but let me just say this, that's it's most likely this is designed to represent a prophet, a priest, and a king who wore similar garments. Almost all of the students of this book make that comment and I think it's a just one. So we are to think of him right at the beginning as a prophet, a priest and a king. He is the prophet that Moses promised. He is the priests who authored the atoning sacrifice, the propitiation by which the holiness and righteousness of God is satisfied, the satisfaction as we have spoken

often in Believers Chapel, and also the King. And the kingly glory of our God is particularly set forth in this book.

So now looking at the seven features, he says in verse 14 that, "His head and his hairs were white like wool." Now you realize that what I'm going to say is not something I can point you to a specific text as interpretation of it so this is I would understand it. When he says, "His head and his hairs were white like wool," the white may represent age. Just as when we look at an individual and he has gray hair you know that he has maturity. Some people call it age, I call it maturity. You have finally attained to maturity. Isn't that a loving term, maturity. Well also, it's likely that this has to do with a divine representation because if you'll remember the ancient of days is one of the ways which our Lord is described. And so we think of him as a person whose head and hairs are white like wool, we are to think of his eternity. And since white probably also purity because that is the meaning of white in other passages of the book, of the book of the Bible. So we are to think perhaps of a divine person who is eternal and holy. So, as he says he's "like unto the Son of man".

He states secondly that, "his eyes were as a flame of fire." These expressions, many of them are taken from Daniel chapter 10 and the vision that Daniel the Prophet received there. There and here probably the idea of penetrating judgment is expressed in "his eyes were as a flame of fire."

I remember reading somewhere that Walter Scott said, "Anyone that had ever seen the eyes of Robbie Birch could never have forgotten them." I've also heard that said of Gladstone, that anyone who had ever seen Gladstone's eyes could never forget them. I'm sure that that was true of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Someone has suggested even you can sense that in his Gospel work because there was the father of the paralytic who said to our Lord, "Look upon my son." That's all, just look upon him. There must have been a sense of authority and a sense of the commanding presence of the eternal God in

our Lord's look, his eyes. Others came to our Lord and said, "Say the word." But the paralytic's father said simply, "look."

"His eyes were as a flame of fire; his feet like unto fine brass," brass suggestive of judgment, swift, the rays of the brass, and swift strength to judge. You see how the sense of judgment begins to emerge from these pictures of our Lord. And we go on to read, "And his voice was as the sound of many waters." The majestic power, the roar of the Aegean in the ears of John, I wonder if there was a storm at that time, but at any rate, his voice was as the sound of many waters.

Campbell Morgan, in one of his books says that he came to appreciate his voice as the sound of many waters when he stood for the first time by Niagara Falls. Now if you've ever been there you'll know that this is one place the Canadians have an advantage over us. There side of the falls in the most impressive, and for me fortunately I stood there first when I saw the falls many many years ago. That vast amount of water coming over the falls so close and the noise and the spray is truly, pardon me for using a common word which the kids have almost destroyed in it meaning, awesome. [Laughter] It was awesome to me. He said as he stood there he thought about, and he was expounding Hebrews chapter 1 that God has spoken in his son, he said he thought of that lake, as he called the Niagara as it came down. It's so wide at that point.

And then he thought of the rivers that in the back behind the lake made the lake. And then he thought about the streams that made the rivers. And then he thought of the rivulets that made the streams and the rivers and all together and realized that what was coming over that falls was the product of a vast number of sources. And then he thought, he said of the Old Testament Scripture and what God had written through the Prophets and Moses, each one contributing their little stream, their little rivulet of information, and realizing that finally when our Lord had come everything has reached its climax in this one person and God has truly spoken to us in the message that he had been given in these various ways. As the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, "In many parts,

many ways, God has spoken in such a person as a son." His voice is the voice of many waters. And when our Lord spoke all of the little parts of the divine revelation were reaching their fulfillment and completion in him.

Majestic Power, God said, God said, God said and it was so, and it was so, and it was so. Majestic power of the Son of God.

And fifthly, he had in his right hand seven stars. The hand, the strong, comforting, preservation of the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. I think of John ten, twenty-eight and twenty-nine, "I give unto them eternal life," not six months life, not life until you sin. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." Think about that. When a person has eternal life he never perishes, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So encompassed in the hands of the father and son we are surely preserved forever.

There are lots of people who preach the Gospel as if, "Yes, you do have life as long as you stay one of his sheep." That's no comfort at all because the comfort I need is the comfort against myself so to speak. I need protection from myself. I know what my nature is. I know that my nature is to wonder. I know my nature is to turn from the Lord. I need some assurance and protection from me, from me above all. That our Lord promises us. I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish. If anyone has eternal life, he shall never perish. That should be obvious to us it seems to me.

He states in the 16th verse also, "and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword." We know what the sword signifies, the piercing, stabbing, word of God, which is powerful when he speaks it.

Now, you and can speak the word of God and nothing can happen. Many people have had that experience. I've had it many times. Given a message from the word of God and it seems as if something I'm surprised, someone will say ten years later you spoke at such and such a time and I received the Lord as my Savior. But so often preachers of the

Word will testify, the preached, sometimes they preach their heart out and nothing happened, because when we think of the power of God we think not simply of the word of God itself but the word in the hands of the spirit. The spirit and the Word, not the spirit without the Word, but the spirit and the Word, not the Word without the Spirit. So the piercing stabbing word of the God, "and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword", powerful when he speaks it. He's the word of God.

And finally, his face, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The preeminent glory summed up here in this last expression, "and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." You'll reflect of course upon the transfiguration where the similar expression is used to describe our Lord's transfiguration. So in the gospels we have his loved stressed. In the Book of Revelation we have his power stressed. In the gospels we have the sorrows which he experienced his suffering stressed. And here we have his glory stressed though both are always present, the emphasis resting upon different things. In the gospels he is the Lamb of God approaching Calvary to be the sacrifice for our sins. But now he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who has purchased us with his sacrifice like the sacrifice of a Lamb.

Now, the effect and the statements of our Lord parallel one another. In other words the vision is explained fully by the statements that follow, or the statements have their fullest meaning when considered in the light of the vision. John states, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." It was an overpowering vision.

Now, he says as dead, not dead, but as dead. To see God in his glory is something we cannot as finite beings undergo. The Scriptures make that very plain. We may see the Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, we look forward to that but we cannot see the infinite glory of God. As far as I'm concerned we shall never see the father. But when we have seen Christ we have seen the Father. But the glory, the infinite glory of God is more than a creature can bear, and that's what you are, you're a creature. John fell at his feet as dead and, "the Lord Jesus laid his right hand on me." Isn't that comforting? He

reached out and put his hand upon John. And he said, John, "Fear not; I am the first and the last." Someone has said it's better to be dead at the feet of our Lord than alive anywhere else. Well, I'll go along with that sentiment, too. But John hears the words, "I am the first and the last".

Now, when he says he's the first, I'm going to take that as meaning that he is before anything else. He is the infinite second person, the eternal second persons of the trinity. John says, John the Baptist when he came that the Son was before him. He was before me. Though he came after John, so he was really before John. "He was before the prophets who spoke by virtue of the power of the spirit of Christ," Peter says. So when they told about the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah to come, it was the spirit of Christ who gave them the words to say. So he was before the prophets. "He was before Israel," Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 4. And he was before Abram the Lord Jesus said, "Before Abraham came to be, I am eternal." He was before the creation. Through him all things came into existence. In fact, he's the eternal Son of God. And therefore the redemption that he accomplished is an eternal redemption sufficient to cover the sins of all men, and mine as well.

He goes on to say in the 18th verse, "I am he that liveth, and became dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. I am he that liveth, and became dead," John this is no dream, this is no delusion, this is no swoon, this is no coma. I'm the inspired person who is the one who lives and I'm the one who also at a point in time became dead. He refers to the event of his cross death. "And, behold, I am alive for evermore," so we say he is not dead, but he was dead. Keep that always before you when we think of our Lord we think of him as one who was dead but who is not dead, but alive forever.

Many of you have crucifixes. You like them. I'm not going to say you shouldn't have them. Someone came out in the morning message and told another friend that I had said that we're going to have to throw away all your gold crucifixes. No, I didn't say that. If I had said that I would have said give them to me before you throw them away, but

maybe you thought I, I thought about that afterwards. No, but I would like for you to understand exactly what a crucifix means and what it does not mean. It means that he suffered and offered a propitiatory sacrifice. But that was what he was talking about when he says he became dead. That's very important. Our salvation is grounded in the cross of Christ. But if he died, and that's all, and he is not a living Savior, then we don't have that redemption which it is supposed to represent.

Mr. Spurgeon used to like to tell the story of how he went to visit someone and he walked in the house and they had a picture of a minister. And he looked at it and he said, "What a ghastly likeness that is." And the man said, "Well, I understand it as taken after he died." [Laughter] And Mr. Spurgeon said, "Well, throw it away. That's not a picture of the man. He had gone before the photograph was taken." [Laughter] Helpful to remember those things. So, "I am alive for evermore."

James Denny used to like to say with reference to the crucifix, that he would like to, because the Church of Scotland in his day around the turn of the century had lapsed into deadness, and so with all of that great historic background here is a dead church. Nothing's worse than that. We'll talk the church that represents that. But he said, "I would like," as he was talking to his theological students, "I would like to take this crucifix and go around in the congregations of the Church of Scotland and hold it up and say, 'God loves like that.'" Well, that's a valid thing, reminding individuals of the definition of divine love is the blood of Calvary. Not the sweetness of romantic love, but the blood of Calvary. That's the definition of divine love and the meaning of what Scripture says about love for one another, as we've expounded in first John.

Jim Denny also said, "No apostle ever remembered Christ." And what he meant by that was not that they did not look into the past and think about what our Lord did when he was here, but their basic relationship to the Lord was not one of memory but one of present experience. That is, they didn't remember him because they were living with him. He was there with them by the Holy Spirit as the Lord promised. So

incidentally, that's not simply the way an apostle should live, that's the way we should live. We shouldn't think of our experience as remembering Christ, but as communing and living with him moment by moment.

He says he has the keys of death and Hades. He not only has ever been to death and into the confines of Hades, but he's burst out of that prison and he's carried away the keys themselves. Total victory. The keys of death and Hades. I think it was Mr. Spurgeon who also said the Savior has the giants head in his hand has carried the witness of victory to the city of God.

Now, finally for our time is drawing near. We don't want a picture of Christ. I don't know why we should specially desire a picture. I certainly would be interested in it if you can give me such a picture, but much more than a picture, I would long for a transforming vision of Christ. A kind of vision that would make me more of a faithful servant of his. Wasn't it Job who said, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even unto his seat." That's the kind of thing that we really would like to have. This vision, it's clear, leads to adoration of the greatness of the Son of God and it ought to lead to trust in his provision. Fear, why should we fear anything? Why he is the first and the last, why should we fear the future? Why he's the last, he'll be there and we'll be there after the future has come and gone. And is it something that is in the past, we'll he's the first. So in the, everything in the past and everything that is to come, the first and the last encompasses it all.

I know there are many things that you may say, I either very sick, I may face death or I have this particular problem before me, but just think he's the first and the last and he will be there long after these thing have come and gone. One of the great experiences of life is to go in them with our hand in his hand.

Now, on the intellectual level people will look at Christianity today and they say Christianity is a failure. It hasn't been able to cope with the things about us. But when we say things like that we've forgotten what he's saying. He's not a failing. He's living.

He's living right now. These things that are transpiring all transpire by virtue of his decretive will and the time is coming when if we are overburdened by the things that are happening, whether intellectually or practically, we will say, "What foolish children we really were."

I was reading Psalm seventy-seven yesterday and that's a magnificent Psalm. Preachers read things and they say to themselves as they read it, "I sure would like to preach this somewhere," and when it ministers to us, particularly. And the psalmist in Psalm seventy-seven is talking about himself primarily, mentions the Lord a few times, about three I believe until verse 10 and mentions himself over and over again.

"Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

And then, someone has said it's like focusing your camera. He's had his camera and he's been looking through it, but it's not focused and so everything is blurred, hazy and muddled. But focusing his camera, he says in the 10th verse, "This is my infirmity: but I will remember," I think that's a proper, properly added here in the text because of what follows.

"I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember the wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."

And finally, he concludes, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." God's magnificent overriding concern, so things in true focus, understanding who he is and what he has done. Then we shall bring forth the royal

diadem and crown him Lord of all. What a fearful thing the vision is if we are not the Lord's. I couldn't think of anything worse than to be in an audience like this and hear an exposition or even a simple reading of Revelation chapter 1 in this vision and not belong to the Lord. Here is the individual who is *de jure*; that is, by the law of God emperor of the universe and *de facto* by what he has done. And in his control of the events, the Lord of all, supreme in his kingdom, Lord of the upper world and Lord of the underworld also, as he has put it, having the keys of death and Hades he sent angels for believers to bring them to himself. He sends angels also to take the lost to their ultimate eternal judgment.

And now here in the presence of a vision like this, to not know Christ, what a tragedy. Let me must say to you something. If Christ were here, if he were here and you saw John's vision, if we had had a magnificent experience of seeing John's vision, what would you do? Well, I have a hunch that most of you would do what John did. You would fall at his feet and probably many of you would turn from your unbelief if you have it, and you would give yourself to him. Well I'd like to say to you, according to this text, he says he's living. He says he's living at this very moment. In fact he's the living one. And so I gather from this that he is here at this very moment in this room with us. His presence is here.

And so as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ I call upon you to come to him. Bow down before him in your heart. Acknowledge him as your own Lord and Savior. Acknowledge that he's died for sinners, and that's what you are, and that he offers eternal life and you wish it. And he offers it on the basis of grace, not on the basis of something that you do, but simply that acknowledge that you are lost, a sinner, and you need it. And receive on the authority of his own word the gift of eternal life. Come to Christ, believe in him, trust in him, and pass from death into life and into the family of God with all of the promises of God that come from the one who is the first and the last. May God help you to do that. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to thee for this magnificent vision of our Lord. And oh God if there are some in this audience who have never come to Christ, young or old, may at this very moment they lift their voices to thee and say, "Lord I want Christ as my own personal Savior." I see he died for sinners and that's what I am. I receive him, and trust in him and the blood that was shed for my eternal salvation. And now may his grace and his mercy go with us as we part.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.