

The Christ, the AntiChrist and the Church

Chapter 1: The Rights of God

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There are three short series of passages of Scripture in connection with each of these to which I would direct you at the outset.

The Christ

Colossians 1:13-18; Hebrews 2:5-10,16; Ephesians 1:22; 4:10.

The Church

Ephesians 1:22; 2:14-16; 3:20-21.

The Antichrist

1 John 2:18-22; 4:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10.



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There is a preliminary word that I want to say before I come directly to the matter of the Christ, the Antichrist, and the church. The apostle John by the Holy Spirit, at the opening of his Gospel, calls Jesus, Son of God, the "Logos". The apostle Paul calls Jesus "the wisdom of God" and "the power of God". Those titles have a special significance. That significance is that Jesus is the embodiment of divine reason, divine ideas. Behind everything in this universe, as we know it, there are occasions, causes, reasons, explanations, meanings, things which demand answers, and the Holy Spirit's work, among other things, and one of His primary works, is to reveal those meanings, those reasons, those explanations, and lead us to the why and wherefore of things in the mind of God. All that explanation is bound up in the very Person of the Lord Jesus. He is the personification of God's reason, the explanation and the answer to the things which lie behind this universe. God's answers are not verbal answers, God's

explanations are not in words. God's full answer is in a Person, and it is therefore the revelation of Jesus Christ which gets behind everything and gives us the key to everything; that answers every question and imparts all the knowledge that is necessary for us to have in order that we may come into perfect oneness with God.

Now, you may ask why I say this. Well, the answer is that, in the development of sonship, God wants His own children to be intelligent; not just to have intelligence and knowledge for the sake of having, but because this spiritual intelligence is life and is power. The knowledge of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is life, and it is power. The revelation of Jesus Christ is a thing before which all the power of evil is destined and doomed to go down, and it is likewise that which is to bring in, in a final way, the condition which is wholly according to God's original thought. When He is fully and finally manifested, there is something which will happen in the realm of evil, on the one hand, so that it is nullified, its end is reached, while, on the other hand, there will come in that condition which God intended should be.

Now you see the importance of having explanations, the importance of recognizing that there is a reason for everything, a meaning in everything, and that the Lord Jesus has come to bring, in His own Person, the meaning of things to light. God does not want us just to accept the acts of God; He wants us to know the meaning of His acts. He does not want us just to see the events; He wants us to have the explanation of those events. The all-inclusive act and event of God is Jesus Christ, and we are not to accept Jesus Christ just as a fact. We have to know what He means, and that in every direction, in every realm. This knowledge is purely of a spiritual kind, and, as I have said, is going to operate tremendously in two directions, one against evil, the other to bring in the state which expresses God's own thought. Now, that may all seem very high-flown and difficult, but what I am wanting to get at, and what I want you to grasp before we go on, is that there is something which lies behind all that we read in the Word of God. There is something which lies behind the fact of Christ, an immense thing which lies behind Him, a reason. There is that which lies behind the church. The church is the answer to something, the explanation of something. The church is the embodiment of a divine reason. We have to know what that is. Now that applies to everything that we have in God's Word. We have not just to see that there is something said, stated, presented; we have to ask the question, What is it, as great as the mind of God, which lies behind that? What is it? Therein lies the realm of our spiritual education, illumination, instruction. That is the sphere of the Holy Spirit's function, to

make that known, and when God has a people in full intelligence in that spiritual way, He has got something which to Him is of tremendous importance and value. Now you will see how it bears upon what follows.

We go on, then, towards some consideration of the Christ, the Antichrist, and the church. I want to condense those vast things into as small a compass as I can. So, to begin with, I would say that there are three things which are common features in each of these.

1) A type of creation

Firstly, a type of creation. It goes by the name of man. Jesus Christ is a type of creation; Antichrist is a type (I am going to vary the word) of creature. Antichrist is not created as Antichrist, but is a type of creature, now as existing, of course, in the more general sense, a type of creation, of being. Then the church, the Body of Christ, is a type of creation, "one new man." a new creation. So you see that first thing is characteristic of all three.

2) A power, a principle

Secondly, a power, a dynamic, a principle. When we speak of principle, we mean some working thing, some governing thing, and all three of these come under that denominator also. Christ is a power as well as a person; a power, a dynamic, — if you will allow me to say it — a principle. That is not taking anything away from His personality, but He is an embodiment of a principle of God in this universe; a law, if you like; something which governs in a mighty way; He is a power. Antichrist is a power, a force, a principle, an active element. The passage in 2 Thessalonians 2 makes it perfectly clear: "whose coming is after the working (the Greek is "after the energizing") of Satan with all power (*dunamis*). Antichrist is a power.

The church, which is His Body, is a power. It is not only the aggregate of individual members, it is something which registers spiritual force and energy in the spiritual realm. Of course, if the church were only a mere organization, a congregation, it would not matter to Satan or anybody else, but when constituted by God, it is a power, it is something to be reckoned with in this universe. Would to God it were living more fully up to that divine conception and need. Nevertheless, if there are but two or three

gathered into the Name, representing the church in a true Holy Spirit oneness, there is a registration of power in the unseen realm.

3) A kingdom

Thirdly, a kingdom, a dominion. Christ is a type of creation; Christ is a power; Christ is a kingdom. "The kingdom of the Son of his love"; all those passages in which we read of His being put above all, being in pre-eminence, with all things under His feet, all this speaks of His kingdom, His dominion. But the Antichrist also represents a kingdom, a dominion, and the church, the Body of Christ, carries that same significance; in union with Christ, it is a kingdom. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The church is "the fulness of him that filleth all...". Then what is man? "Thou madest him to have dominion"!

Now these things I think are perfectly plain and perfectly simple, but they only lead to other things. There are other things which are bound up with these. The first of the issues is no less a matter than the rights of God.

The Recovery of the Rights of God

With the Christ, the one all-inclusive issue is the rights of God. He is the very incarnation and embodiment of those rights. You ask now the meaning of Christ? Get back behind the fact of Christ, behind the Person, behind the Christ presented to us, whom we accept personally, whose teaching we accept, whose work we accept and wonder at, the facts of whose life and death, resurrection and ascension we believe in; get back behind it all, and what is the meaning? What does He mean? Why Jesus Christ? The answer is, "The rights of God in this universe". Now that goes to the heart of our first point about Christ, namely, of His being a type of creation; a kind of being, a man, in whom the rights of God take the entire place of concern and devotion. Here you have a Man, "The man Christ Jesus". "There is... one mediator... between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). "What is man... the son of man?" "We see Jesus"! or in the familiar designation of 1 Cor. 15:45, "the last Adam". Here you have a type of creation, and the explanation of that particular type of creation is the rights of God. He is a Man whose spirit, being in living union with God, is governed by God's Spirit, and all in relation to God's rights. He is governed by God's Spirit. He is governed in His mind, His heart, His will, His reason, His desire, His choice, by the Spirit of God in relation to God's rights.

Now you see the challenge came there right at the beginning. The assault was made upon the first Adam, to get him to use his mind, his reason, his desire, his feelings, his will, his choice, as out of relation to God, apart from consideration for God, in an unrelated and independent way, putting back what God had made known as His mind, and acting apart from and behind that. Of course, the object of the adversary was to rob God of His rights as they were bound up with that man, and from that time onward God's rights were taken from Him in that creation, in this creation, in this universe.

The whole story of the Old Testament, as of the New Testament, and of all the ages, is the terrible story of the battle for the rights of God. Through seer and prophet, and every divine representative, the conflict was concerning the rights of God in this universe; rights which were being stolen from Him, rights which He was not being ceded; rights which, being His, were not recognized, but were taken and employed for other ends, for another purpose, for another kingdom. Here in the last Adam you have one whose spirit, being in living union with God, brings Him entirely under the government of God's Spirit, and the whole explanation of Jesus Christ is the rights of God. I am not forgetting His deity. Do not misunderstand me. I am speaking of Him now as the representative Man, the Son of Man. He is the One who gives God the full and final place, whose sole business is that connected with the rights of God; and these, through Adam's failure, have become a matter of conflict. So that in Him as the last Adam, the representative Man, all has to be perfected through sufferings.

If we inquire as to the nature of His being made "perfect through suffering", the answer is in one word, "He... suffered being tempted." Now, the channel of the temptation may vary from time to time. At one time it may be His physical condition, and this may be one of hunger, as at the beginning of His career, or it may be, as at the end, the dire agony of the cross. At another time the means of the temptation may be of a different kind. The temptation may come along the line of some spiritual concern, disappointment, — we cannot cover the whole ground of the temptations of Jesus Christ, the forms of temptation, of trial, of testing, so many were these. But it was the trial that was the suffering to Him, the tempting was the suffering: "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin". He is being made perfect through the sufferings of temptation; temptation to impatience, for example, to bring in His kingdom along popular lines by using the powers at His command. How many were His temptations! By these means He was made perfect.

Now when you get behind the temptation, and you ask, Why tempted, what is the point, what is the meaning, what is the reason? The answer again is, He has come solely for the rights of God to be recovered and eternally secured against any further possibility of their being lost. Every temptation was an effort to get Him away from that ground of God's rights. "This is my beloved Son"! There is a statement made by God. Thereupon a situation of severe difficulty arises, and over against the first voice we hear a second, "If thou be the Son...". There is an "if". Whence does that "if" derive its strength? From the circumstance in which He is at the moment. Oh, there is a strength in temptation when you are physically exhausted! We all know that. We know how much easier it is for the enemy to gain an advantage at a time of physical exhaustion, whatever may be the cause or occasion. But combined with that, you see there had been a time of spiritual experience, and those who know anything about spiritual experience, know that it takes its toll in the physical realm and leaves open to the assault of the enemy. Well now — temptation to act from Himself independently in self-will, self-preservation, to vindicate Himself. If Thou be the Son of God, do something! You are in necessity, you are in need, you are in difficulty; it is in your power to do something, and if you do that, that will prove that you are that somebody. You see it is all this subtle "if" question. The point is, can such a One who has come expressly for the rights of God, allow anything in Him to raise a question about what God has said, what God has affirmed, about God? If? If? Now you and I may have had many "ifs" and many questions. You and I are only in the course of things, but we know quite well that what God is seeking to do with us is to eliminate the "if"; that is, to get us steadily moving to the place where, no matter what the conditions are, we have no "if" about God. The power by which we shall reach that position is the power of the absolute triumph of the Lord Jesus on that same ground. He succours those who are tempted because He, having been tempted, has triumphed, has been made perfect through such sufferings. But He had no man to succour Him in temptation. He passed into it and met it all in an utter way upon His soul. Would He move from His ground of God's rights? God has a right to be believed: that goes to the foundation of the universe. God has a right to be believed; God has the right to be trusted; God has the right to be obeyed; these are God's rights in God's universe. Under dire conditions, the Lord Jesus fought out the battle of God's rights and has become the perfected Man after God's own heart, a type, the first fruits, the first-begotten among many brethren, the One who, having been made perfect through sufferings, is bringing many sons to glory. Here is Christ, the type, and you see the type of man God is after.

Antichrist — A Spirit as well as a Person

Now, just for a moment in passing on, you want to know what Antichrist is? On that point, namely, the type of creature, the type of being, the type is just the opposite of the Christ. All-inclusively, it is that which has no concern for God's rights, no consideration for God's place, but rather acts towards its own ends: and, beloved, this is where the application becomes so personal and so solemn; where it is so practical. Antichrist is, before all else, a spirit. We shall probably speak more fully about Antichrist later, but I want you to notice this, that John speaks of Antichrist in three ways.

First of all, he speaks in the general sense — antichrist: no article at all — "...antichrist cometh". Then he speaks in the collective sense and says there are many antichrists. But he further speaks in that particular sense of the Antichrist. Do you mark that? Then he says this, "Every spirit... this is the spirit of antichrist." Antichrist, then, is basically a spirit, and that is the spirit which works contrary to the course taken by the Christ. He has taken a course of utter and unreserved abandonment to the rights and interests of God, no matter what it costs, even up to the last, the pouring out of His soul unto death, — "not my will, but thine". All is bound up with God's rights. The spirit of Antichrist is that which works contrary to that and has interests that are not the interests of God; self-interests, ends which are not God's ends: and — will you suffer this word? — the spirit of Antichrist has oft-times actuated children of God. The spirit of Antichrist is in our fallen nature, and we know it well; we know the conflict concerning the rights and the will of God.

We know the awful conflict arising in temptations to impatience, temptation to do something when God's hand is upon us keeping us from doing anything, not allowing us to do things, but saying all the time, if not in word to us, "Be still." If He were to say it to us in words, of course, it would be a great help to us; but He does not help us in that way, He simply does not allow us. Do something! says this will, says this tempter behind this fallen nature, this rebel nature, Do something! Take it into your hands; you can if you wish: you can do something, you can have something, you can show something; it is in your power: do it! Oh! the temptation along the line of impatience is only one of the thousand ways in which we are tempted, and whenever we yield to that temptation, Antichrist has triumphed, the spirit of Antichrist. I know that it means much more than that, but I am seeking thus to bring this to its practical application, and not

just to have an objective conception of truth. How this thing applies is what matters, and the help that might come to us in this consideration, I think, lies here. "The man Christ Jesus" has on the one hand triumphed in every such temptation as is common to His brethren: on the other hand He is in God's presence to succour us in those very temptations, that we shall be conformed to His image and eventually become the type of creation that God has ever had in mind, in whom there is vested His rights, who will be the custodians of the rights of God in this universe. Now, that sounds an immense thing, perhaps too great; but is not that the very significance of the cherubim all the way through Scripture?

You have in the cherubim representative figures of the whole creation. They are four and four is the number of creation. They are fourfold, embracing the whole creation, and in the cherubim, from the gates of the garden right on to the Revelation at the end, it is the custodianship of God's rights that is in view. There they stand to begin with, with a flame of a sword. God's rights have been violated and they take up the challenge; and then, right through Scripture, until the four living ones are seen at the end, you find the same principle, the rights of God — they worshipped. And what is worship? What is adoration? Is it not ascribing unto God His rights? Is it not bringing to Him that which is His due? Is it not the recognition of Him as having a right to all things in all the universe? God is after a man, a corporate, universal man, and that is where the church comes in, as one with Christ and over against the Antichrist: and it is not just a case of outward association; it is something wrought right into the heart of every member of Christ. That something is what is true of Christ, the triumph of the rights of God, the interests of God over all selfish, personal, worldly, fleshly interests and concerns. God is doing that with you and with me.

The Practical Issue

Now, I must stop there for the time being. It is only a broad view of things. Beloved, this is not an untimely word. There are other things which we could say, but everybody who has eyes to see and ears to hear recognizes that the full, final manifestation of the Antichrist is coming very near. The whole thing is being narrowed down, concentrated. The final issue looms upon the horizon. Oh, then, what does that say to me? What is the value of all this to me? I do not want just to be a student of prophecy, just to know what the Bible teaches about Antichrist. No, what is the spiritual value to me, to you, if we can in any way discern the development of the spirit of Antichrist, the intensification

of this thing in God's universe, the heading up of this thing to a climax: and we are blind if we cannot see that today. If I thought it were wise and would in any way strengthen what I am saying, I could give you strings of quotations from up-to-date utterances, in word and by pen, which are the very essence of the ultimate expression of Antichrist: the worship of man, names of men being mentioned in this way: "He is our Jesus Christ and his books are our sermon on the mount." Oh, any amount of that sort of thing. I say we are blind if we cannot see the heading up of this matter. If we see that, there are two things that we may expect. One is the manifestation of Christ. Ah yes, but there is another thing, and that is the intensification of the Spirit of the Christ in the Body of Christ for its conformity to the image of Christ. The Body of Christ is not just some entity, it is the embodiment of spiritual things brought to perfection; and, if I am not mistaken, this thing is true in the cases of multitudes of the Lord's own children, that they are being pressed and pressed and pressed, almost out of measure, as to whether they are going to believe and trust God despite everything that seems to contradict God; whether God is going to be trusted for His own sake, believed in for what He is, not for what He does; not for the deliverance which He works, not for the help that He brings, not for the manifestations of Himself in any way, but because He is. He is God, and, being what He is, He must be trusted, must be believed in, must be obeyed. We must stand our ground and not move, simply because we believe that God is, and that He is what He is; and that is the test which comes, that is the test which is being pressed home. He allows all sorts of things to happen which look like contradictions of Himself. He takes us by ways which are more than human nature can stand. We are conscious of coming again and again to the point where our ability to go on and to endure is at an end. We are in the final test. It is the whole question of faith.

Faith! That is where Adam broke down; that is where God's rights were lost; that is where Satan scored and triumphed, and on that point God is going to get back His rights. It is all focusing down to one point, namely, faith. The final issue for the saints in this dispensation is the issue of a faith which is faith indeed, without any bolstering up, any supports, any kind of help; faith which is only succoured by the Son of God through the Eternal Spirit and not by anything else. Are we in that issue? I think we are. And, so far as the spiritual principle is concerned, it is a terrific battle with Antichrist, so that the saints, the very elect, if it were possible, would be moved from their ground and carried away.

Chapter 2: A Vessel for the Rights of God

I am going to enlarge upon one or two things which were little more than stated in our last meditation on "The Christ, The Antichrist, and The church." We pointed out that there were three things which are common features of these.

Firstly, a particular and peculiar type of creation, namely, man. This, as we have said, has reference to Christ, to Antichrist, and to the church, which is "one new man". It is in connection with this that I want to say a few further words at the outset.

We have to get behind everything with one word and one inquiry, and that as to purpose.

The Worship of God

We ask, first of all, what is the divine purpose in the creation of man? The answer is that God may receive, may have something in this universe which is to His own glory. I know that is a very comprehensive statement, and I can do little more at this time than say that. For some reason, in the mystery of His thoughts and ways, God had an investment, an inheritance in man. There was that which He determined to display, which would bring back to Him glory and honor, and thus, for His own glory, He made man, so that in a moral way, that is, in a responsible way, a creation should be worshipping God, in the fullest sense of that word "worship". I am not sure that we have yet grasped the real meaning of worship. Sometimes we think of it as singing hymns and praying, or saying prayers; as going through a religious form, maybe in the offering of thanks, praise, or letting the heart go out to the Lord. But I think there is something more than that, much more than that in worship. However, we will come back to that again. The point for the moment is that all that worship means in bringing back to God that which is to His glory, to His honor, to His praise, to His satisfaction, was evidently the object which motivated God in creation, in the creation of man.

Man A Unique Creation

Now, in order that it might be so, man would have to be constituted in a peculiar way. He would have to be so constituted that there was that in him which was also in God, and which formed a link between God and himself, that which was of the same order as God. I am not speaking now of Deity or Godhead, but of nature, of constitution. So man

was created and, in the deepest reality of his being and constitution, there was the human spirit, the spirit of man, which was the faculty for communion with God, who is Spirit, and who cannot be communicated with, only in spirit, cannot be worshipped (using that word again in all its content), cannot be worshipped, only "in spirit and in truth." Thus man was a peculiar creation, constituted in this particular way, so that there should be a definite point of relatedness with God, a link of a likeness in constitution. The New Testament word is, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit", and, "There is a spirit in man," is an Old Testament statement. Well now, while that relationship exists, all God's purpose is possible of realization, and God has the ground upon which to proceed toward His great end. That is man, a peculiar creation, a particular type. It is between man so constituted, and God who is a Spirit, that the Spirit of God moves as the directing, governing, illuminating agent of the purposes of God.

We know what happened with the first Adam; we know the result of his failure in faith and obedience. It was that he became severed from God, which means that the instrument or faculty by which man was in union with God, in communication with God, was severed from Him, and in its severance became dead, in the Bible sense of the word "death"; not nullified, not annihilated, but severed from God, out of union with Him who is its life. But something else had happened, and this is where Antichrist comes in.

Satan's Adaptation of Man to His Own Ends

Here is another in God's universe who has set his heart upon being worshipped, who has set his heart upon universal dominion, and who also recognizes that he can only get his end through man. Moreover he recognizes that, just as God, to reach His end, must have a man, or man peculiarly constituted, in relationship with Himself spiritually, so he must also have man peculiarly constituted to be in relation with him for his ends. Thus, behind the understanding of Adam, Satan operated to constitute man in a different way for his own purpose, or to interfere with God's man, God's type. The result was that, just as Adam before his disobedience was, by his spirit, in union with God for divine purposes, now, through his soul, he is in union with Satan for his purposes; because it was the soul that Satan captured. If reason, desire and will are the components of the soul, all these three were captured by Satan, and the result is that there is in the Adamic race now a type of being which has been adjusted to Satan's purposes, and with which Satan is allied. That is the tragedy of this creation

now, as outside Christ. It is not only a fallen creation, a broken thing, an impaired thing; it is not only a sinful thing, a weak thing, and a thing in which are the seeds of corruption, but, more than that, the positive aspect is that Satan is allied to it. There is an alliance; not by man's conscious consent necessarily, but the fact is there. Oh, the fact is there, and, deeper than reason or thought or consciousness, facts lie right down at the root of the nature of things.

We need to remember that this applies just in the same way in the other direction, and that when there is a new creation in Christ Jesus; when God has recovered that union with us through regeneration; when that spirit lying in death has been quickened and raised together with Christ and "joined to the Lord... one spirit," the union is deeper than reason, deeper than thought, deeper than feeling. It is a fact in the very nature of things. If only the people of God would believe that!

Now, you ask any respectable, decent, unconverted man of this world whether he is in alliance with Satan, whether the Devil is really bound up with him and there is a union between them, and what will he answer? You hardly dare suggest it. You will be a bold man if you do. Why? He does not feel it, he does not see it; it never occurs to him, never enters his head; nevertheless, it is a fact. It is deeper than his consciousness, deeper than his belief: and oh, how often, I fear, it is like that with the saints; that the union which is deeper than everything sometimes gets even deeper than belief. I mean the saints are sometimes tempted to disbelieve or to doubt that the union holds good because of the absence of the sense of it, because they are not able to see or to feel it: but it is there. Well now, I have gone a little aside, and we must turn again to our main consideration.

For the two things, God's end and Satan's end, there must be a type which is suited to those ends, adjusted to those ends, and with which the one concerned with dominion is in relationship, vital relationship; there must be a union. We saw in our previous meditation that all the rights of God are bound up with man. That is but using another phrase for worship — all the rights of God in this universe. So all that Satan would claim as his rights is also bound up with man.

The Embodiment of Rights

That leads us to the second thing. There must be an incarnation or embodiment of those rights, or those assumed rights, as the case may be, an incarnation. Well, Adam

was made. But that is not enough. Innocence is one thing, triumphant moral responsibility is another thing. God can never be satisfied with having so many innocents. If He were, He would have made us all little tiny babies and never have let us grow up! But that is not God's thought. God's thought is moral responsibility; that is sonship as over against childhood. So Adam must be tested on this principle of responsibility for God's rights, inasmuch as they are vested in him, and he is the custodian of them. God has an inheritance in him, and he is put to the test and fails, and drags down the race with him. Satan thus captures that race for his own kingdom, his own dominion, his own ends, his own worship. Oh, how he craves that worship. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." That, to the Son of God! If only Thou wilt worship me!

Then a second man came to the rescue. To the rescue of what? Man? Yes: but more than that, He came to the rescue of God's rights to redeem the purchased possession, the inheritance. What a marvelous fragment that is of Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "What the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." We have never been able to cope with that. We look into ourselves as we are and all... draw back from such a word. The riches of His inheritance in the saints — in us? But take a wider view. See God's original thought, and you will see a creation which ultimately, in oneness with God, will embody all the divine thoughts; where, through that creation, God is getting in this universe all His rights and worship — His inheritance in the saints. I think that is what Paul means in that glorious burst of doxology in that same letter, "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." Glory in the church and in Christ Jesus! That requires an incarnation of the divine rights, and that brings us to where we were in chapter one.

The Issue Fought Out in Christ

The last Adam, coming to the rescue of the inheritance in man, becomes the embodiment of the divine rights and moves out into the arena of the universe to be assailed by all the wild, anarchical, lawless powers of him who is against the purpose of God, and has his own kingdom in view, and by him this last Adam is put to the test. In a full and universal sense, He is tried out as to the rights of God. The issue is brought down to one terrible, though simple, issue — Myself or Thyself? That is all it amounts to, if ever you can fathom or range that. But that is what it is: Myself, Thyself?

My will, Thy will? It is a question as to whether He would, for any reason, in any circumstances, on any condition, move away from the ground of utter and absolute loyalty to God. That is the question. Can He be driven from that ground? Can He be pressed off that ground? Can He be tricked to forsake that ground? Can anything that Satan can do — and that is saying a terrible thing — can anything that Satan can do, with his wide, deep range of resource, get that Man to move off the ground of loyalty to God, and God's rights? If so, what has happened? The very Christ has in principle become the Antichrist. He has been turned round on Himself to defeat Himself. Antichrist has scored. It seems almost inconceivable that Satan should ever think for an instant that he could capture the last Adam and make Him the instrument of serving his ends; and yet why should he offer such a bait, such a bribe, and make such an appeal so persistently — If only Thou wilt worship me! What a lot there must be in man, if the kingdom of God throughout countless ages is bound up with man, and if the kingdom of Satan, with all that it means, is bound up with man! Well might the question be asked, "What is man, that thou makest mention of him?" What a lot there is in man!

Well then, no wonder there is a big battle for man. No wonder that there was a terrific, universal, eternal battle fought out on the ground of the soul of "the man Christ Jesus." But what a victory! A victory for all time, and for eternity, and for all the universe; a victory for all God's purpose. What a victory! And if it was of such a range and of such consequence, then how bitter it must have been. Who will ever know the depth of that conflict, the awfulness of that darkness? We can never exaggerate what the Son of God went through. Thus the rights of God have become eternally incarnated in "the man Christ Jesus." He not only came in the flesh, He came in flesh. I want you to notice that in John's epistle. Strike out the word "the"; it is not in the original at all. It is not that He just came and took flesh form to serve a purpose and then abandoned it; He is yet the Man. "There is... one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus." You notice in the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself, or presents Himself, as "I Jesus." Jesus is always the title of His humanity, and here in a Man the rights of God are embodied, incarnated, secured triumphantly.

Satan's Counterfeit of Divine Purpose

But still Satan has his kingdom in fallen man. He has his kingdom, has his connection, and is getting what he desires. But this is the point: he is also steadily moving and working toward a concentrated embodiment and incarnation of his rights; and so, as we

saw in our previous meditation, we have these three stages in John's first epistle, concerning Antichrist. We have Antichrist as a spirit: "Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist." Then it is said, "...there are many antichrists." That is Antichrist corporate. (You will see that links us with the church on the other side.) Then we have the definite statement, "This is the antichrist..." So that it is all heading up into one supreme incarnation and embodiment of the spirit of Antichrist. If you have any doubt about some of the things I have just been saying with reference to relatedness, read again 2 Thess. 2:3-9: "...whose coming is according to the working (energizing) of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." According to the energizing of Satan! Antichrist is energized by Satan, just as the Christ (as is the meaning of the anointing) is energized by the Spirit of God. Just as the church, which is His Body, is energized and actuated by the Holy Spirit, so the Antichrist is energized and actuated by Satan.

What is the first object of Antichrist? It is, as John says, to nullify Jesus Christ. I want you to have this; this is precious. 1 John 4:3, "Every spirit which confesseth not Jesus...." The margin renders it, "Every spirit which annulleth Jesus." There is some dispute over the actual words in the original, but I think the significance of this marginal rendering is altogether in favor of its being the more correct one — annuls or nullifies Jesus, rules Him out, discounts Him, puts Him aside. You look at the context, and you see, of course, that it is not merely a question of Jesus as an historic figure, but of who Jesus is; that is the point at issue. The context makes that perfectly clear, and you will see by the other references to Antichrist in this letter that it is a question of the Father and the Son. The second chapter very plainly shows that to be the occasion. Now, it is an annulling of who Jesus is, that is the first work of Antichrist. Just what does this mean? Well, Jesus is the Son of God incarnate. That is who Jesus is, God manifest in the flesh. To nullify all the meaning of the incarnation is the first object of Antichrist. Why? What are the elements of that?

Well, obviously it is first of all God reacting to the fall, God reacting to what Satan did at the beginning, God coming out in Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It was God manifest in the flesh, reacting to all that had come about through Satan's interference. Very well then, the only way to counter that is to nullify who Jesus is. But it goes further. It is not only the annulling of God in His reaction, but it is the annulling of the issue that is bound up with that divine reaction: and what is this but the heirship and kingdom of God's man.

Man is the heir: the kingdom is his inheritance. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We are "heirs of God... joint heirs with Christ." "Thou madest him (man) to have dominion." The man after God's own heart is the heir of all things; the kingdom is his inheritance. Well, to annul Jesus is but another way of saying, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Therefore, nullify Jesus.

Now perhaps you wonder why I was so happy a moment ago in calling your attention to this. It is because of what we see in 2 Thess. 2:8: "Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume (or annul) with the breath of his mouth." Antichrist's first business is to annul Jesus, and the last thing that happens is that, in the appearing of Jesus, he himself is annulled. That is great, is it not? That is divine reaction.

The Outworking of Divine Purpose in the Church

Where in all this does the church come in? The church is Christ's Body: we are members of Christ. In this connection we have that utter statement by the Spirit through Paul, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). The article is there in the original, "the Christ." Now, we have seen that Antichrist is a spirit: Antichrist is also a corporate body. There are many antichrists, many incarnations under one spirit; an imitation of God's one Body, all heading up to one great supreme manifestation. "So also is the Christ": a Body, many members, and every member of that Body is called into the purpose of God for the incarnating of His rights, in vital union with Christ as the Head of the Body. So that the church is chosen in Him before the foundation of the world to be the ultimate vessel and instrument in which all God's inheritance is secured; to use Paul's words, to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" — God's inheritance in the saints. Beloved, this explains exactly what is happening to saints; and oh, that saints recognized this one thing a little more clearly, that the supreme thing with God now is not what they do for Him, their work in this world in the sense of activities and enterprises, but the supreme thing with God now is their conformity to the image of God's Son, the inworking into the saints of that which has been made perfect in Christ. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:11), and that which has been consummated in the Head, in that representative, first-begotten Man of this new race, has to be wrought into every one of

His members. That involves, on the one hand, triumph over Antichrist as a principle, as a law, as a nature, as a power, and, on the other hand, the manifestation of God's glory: and that is what is going on.

I said that I wish we recognized more clearly how much more important it is to God that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son than that we should be doing all sorts of things for Him. We seem to put the greatest value upon what we are doing, so much so that, if the Lord cuts us off from the doing and shuts us up to testings and trials in an inward way, where every divine virtue is made necessary, and all our own virtues are proved worthless, we revolt and want to be doing something. Let us get out of this and do something, be at work! It is so often the case when we are laid aside in suffering, and the Lord is trying to produce something more of Christ: patience, forbearance, love, sympathy. We want to get out of that quickly, to be doing something. That is not doing anything! Yet it is true that, when the Lord really gets a purchase upon a life, He occupies far more of His time with the changing of that life into His own likeness, than He does in trotting that life around the world doing all sorts of things. What is it that God is doing? He is preparing the church for dominion. He is making the kingdom an inward thing, before it is an outward thing. He is doing a secret thing, before displaying it to a wondering universe. He is building Christ within unto the day of the manifestation of Jesus Christ. If you doubt that, there is one Scripture that will prove conclusive: "...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10); not by all them that believe, but in all them that believe. That is the day of the manifestation of the sons of God; not the children of God, but the sons of God. Upon that deepest, and, from our standpoint, most difficult work, God is diligently and painstakingly engaged now. If Paul is a type for the dispensation, the most fruitful part of Paul's life was not when he was running about the world, but when he was shut up in prison and wrote letters. The greatest revelation that has come to us of Jesus Christ has come through those final letters of the imprisonment. We are taken back into the "before times eternal," taken through the ages, taken on to the ages of the ages; we are given marvelous unveilings. The wonder of those prayers of Paul is enough to leave us breathless. "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling..." (Eph. 1:18). Sit down with that. That is only one of the petitions. We can gather an enormous amount in that fragment, "the hope of his calling." But that is only one thing, and upon that there follows, "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints..." Think of that! David would say, Selah! Then further we have, "and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who

believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all..." (Eph. 1:19-21). Three fragments of one prayer! Can you comprehend that, can you fathom that? What a revelation! What a concentrated essence of divine thought! But Paul had to be locked up and stopped from all outward activity for that revelation to come through. Yes, I believe he had to be.

The Reversal of the Antichrist Principle by the Cross

I am going to close by reminding you again of one thing in connection with this that is going on in us. I would put it in this way, that God is seeking, definitely, deliberately, persistently, to undercut Antichrist in us, by working out the principle of the cross; because, until the cross has been wrought into us, we are energized by a soul-life with which the adversary is linked up. Our reason is so energized. All is just soul activity in the mind and the reason. The natural man is altogether estranged from God and cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, and thus all the reasonings of the natural man fall short of God's thought. It is, therefore, antichrist in principle. Something has happened: it cannot get through to God; it is missing the way all the time. Yet men are bringing the power of their own reason to bear upon the things of God and the result is rationalism and the nullification of Jesus. Is not that the fruit of rationalism; the nullification of Jesus, as to who He is? Even in the realm of religion Antichrist operates, through an uncrucified human reason taking the place of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In every way, not only in the reason, but in the emotion, in the will of the natural man, God is seeking to undercut the principle of Antichrist. And even the children of God can lapse grievously and lamentably there, so that in spirit that principle can get an advantage; because the spirit of Antichrist has such a range, from that of simple and ignorant desires or acts, right on to the positive expression of a fully developed policy, a creed, a philosophy, or a science. That is what we are in today. The spirit of Antichrist has produced a policy, a creed, a philosophy of life, a science. You see it developing in the world; the potentialities and destiny of man, man as he is, without God, without the necessity for God, without a need for the Spirit of God, without any need for regeneration. Man — what a wonderful creature he is, and what he can do! That is the creed that today is rising and gaining power in this world. The whole trend is towards the gathering of the dominion of this world under a few supermen, and then heading up into the one. It is a conception of man as having all resources in himself, the root of the matter in himself, and all that turned into a creed,

and into a policy. That is where it ends; but, beloved, it begins very often in something very simple and it very often manifests itself in the simple or ignorant desires or acts. In one case that very thing leads to murder, in the case of Cain. It is all one spirit, one principle. You see Cain set aside the blood, the atonement, the need of a death by substitution. All that the Christ means for reunion with God, Cain set aside, and brought in his own works, his own resources, his own potentialities, and thought that God could be communicated with on that basis. That is the spirit of Antichrist, and when that met the judgment of God, it issued in murder; that is, when it was found that God rejected that, the spirit of Antichrist went out in murder.

You say that is very terrible; no saint would ever be caught there. I am not thinking that you are likely to go and literally slay some brother because of this thing. But the principle and the spirit is this, that some child of God, some servant of God, some Christian worker, begins to assert himself and to employ his own resources and strength and wisdom in the things of God, and, coming sooner or later to a deadlock, finding that is not getting through and the blessing of God is not there, a spirit of resentment and bitterness rises into the heart and someone is going to suffer for that, some simple child of God is going to come under the lash for that. We see it. This false assertion will at some time or other involve other people in malice, in hatred, in a spirit of murder. If you cannot accept that, let me remind you of David. Yes, David was a saint; David was a man of God, David knew the Lord from his childhood. But you remember that painful, that terrible, tragic episode in David's life when he numbered Israel. Even Joab, that carnal man, saw the danger and pleaded with him not to do it. But no, in strength of will he put Joab aside. "I have made up my mind to do this; let it be done." It was done as he desired, and then the angel of the Lord said, "Choose one of three things, famine, war, or pestilence." A sword of judgment was unsheathed, and the scourge went over the land: the inhabitants of Israel were mown down by pestilence, till David, heart-broken, cried to the Lord: "O my Lord, I am the responsible one. What have these sheep done? Let your wrath be turned against me." That was a terrible occasion. Why? What was wrong with numbering Israel? For one thing, the numbering of Israel had always been according to the state of redemption. They were only numbered on redemption ground, that is, regarding their value to God as redeemed ones. That is the only valuation that ever rests upon anything; what they are to God as redeemed ones. David had taken no account of the shekels of the sanctuary, the redemption money. What he was after was to know his own resources of man-power, how great a kingdom he had. That is Antichrist in principle. A saint is trapped

and caught in a snare with most tragic consequences. How necessary it is then to walk in the Spirit. How necessary it is for the Lord to keep the cross operating against this flesh, lest ambition arise, self-assertiveness, strength of nature; and all that is Satan's ground, on which he encamps: and to do what? To dishonor the Lord, take His rights from Him, and that through the saints.

One of the greatest tragedies is that the church has served Satan's purpose so well, because it is not a crucified church. Oh, there must be a subjective state of circumcision, if He is to get His end and have the glory. I mean subjective state of circumcision, circumcision which is of the heart, which Paul says is the putting away of the whole body of the flesh. Well, you see, Antichrist moves a bit nearer to us. We have only thought of Antichrist as some person arising at some future date according to prophecy, and of certain things happening. Yes, quite true, but John says Antichrist in the first place is a spirit, and then he says that Antichrist is constituted a corporate body. This latter is Satan's imitation of the Body of Christ: a corporate thing by one spirit, in order to bring in his kingdom, to bring in his man. When that man comes in and has his short season of reigning, dominion, it will be a very terrible and very real one, as is made quite clear in the Book of Revelation. But the matter comes nearer than prophecy, and I think that any prophecy which has no immediate spiritual application has missed its object. Prophecy has to come right home to us now. Antichrist is very near to the nature of every one of us.

Well now, what is to be the issue of all this? It must bring us at once to the point where the Lord Jesus started: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God"; "I delight to do thy will"; "Not My will, but thine, be done." In a word, it is abandonment to the Lord; not abandonment to the Lord for service, in order to be used, that is, not abandonment to the Lord for blessing, to get anything, but just abandonment to the Lord for His glory in any way in which He sees He can get it. All that matters, or should matter, is that the Lord is getting the glory. If by my doing nothing the Lord can get glory, all right; or if the Lord wants me to go at great cost to the ends of the earth and can get glory in that way, all right. It is not whether it is here or there, this or that; the consequences do not matter. The thing that matters is that the Lord is getting what He is after in me. That is the spirit of the Christ, and anything other than, or contrary to that is Antichrist in spirit.

Now you understand what the Body of Christ is, and is for, and what the Lord is seeking to do in it. Well, that brings it right out of the realm of mere doctrine, teaching,

theory, and makes it an immediately practical thing, and I trust it will be fruitful in us at this time.

Chapter 3: The Church as a Functioning Body

Reading: John 4:20-24; Matthew 4:8-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:4,8,15; 19:20; 20:4,5; Ephesians 3:21.

We shall be considering certain features of the church as a functioning Body, and the first of these, and the all-inclusive one, is worship.

When we come to contemplate the matter of worship, we find that we are at once both at the centre and circumference of the universe; for the supreme function of the creation is worship. Worship is going on throughout this whole universe now, but it is divided, and much of it is not called worship, is not recognized to be worship, but nevertheless it is worship. I mean that the greater part of this world is not consciously, wittingly, willingly, admittedly worshipping. To use that word to the majority of men would be to provoke hostility, to incur some rebuff. But nevertheless it is true that, although divided and in so large a degree unrecognized, worship is going on right through this universe, and it is just there that the universe is divided. It is just on that very point that the cleavage exists.

Satan's Bid for Worship

We have read some passages which show us that worship is the supreme desire and ambition of Satan. His heart is set upon being worshipped, and he goes to all lengths to realise his ambition, even to seeking to ensnare and trip up the very Son of God Himself, or to bribe Him. This ambition, this desire of Satan for worship is, as we see, headed up in the false prophet and the beast, the Antichrist, the son of perdition, Satan's false Son of God, Satan's incarnation at the end. Let us remember that the word "antichrist" does not only mean against Christ, it means also in the place of Christ. There will be something deceptive, some delusion about Antichrist that will cause multitudes of people to take him for the Christ. He is going to be found in the temple of God, setting himself up as God and being worshipped as God: and I ask you "What temple is that?" Can you find a temple in the New Testament that answers to that? Careless interpreters have said it will be the temple which will again be built by

the Jews in Jerusalem. Well, there are facts to be taken account of which will, I think, very quickly explode that idea. At the time of Antichrist's manifestation, the Jews will still be in apostasy, in rejection of Christ and themselves rejected and suffering something of their tribulation, and any temple that might be built in Jerusalem by Zionism, will never be the temple of God. That is one thing. But the bigger question is as to whether even that temple will have been built by this particular time. What is the temple of God? Well, the only answer we have in the New Testament is the people of God. Among the people of God, Antichrist will gain a place of power and draw to himself that which belongs to God, draw away from Christ.

Take rationalism alone, which has gained so great and so strong a foothold among the people of God. It has set aside the Christ, and has robbed Him of His highest values. There you see the very principle of Antichrist at work. What is the false prophet, if not representative of a false ministry, a ministry which has become false to Christ in the very midst of His people? — and there is plenty of that today. Well, that is only to mention those things, to see that the drawing of worship to himself is the one final, supreme object of Satan, and he heads that up in the Antichrist.

Now, in mentioning this, I have an object, which is to point out that, as in every other matter, what intensifies on one side toward the end, is meant to intensify on the other side toward the end. We can take it that the intensification of Satanic activity on the one side is, on Satan's part, but the offset to the intensification of God's activity on the other side. We have seen that in other respects, and here we note it in this matter. The thing which will burst forth in its fullness and finality on the divine side in the end will be worship. You see that in Revelation 12. But as we near that time this other thing is intensified, and so it becomes a very important matter for the Lord's people to give attention to the matter of worship; to recognize that the Lord would have worship intensified, would lead us to become more and more a worshipping people, a people whose supreme and all-inclusive function is worship; that is, that worship envelopes everything, carries everything along. The Lord would have His church increasingly a worshipping church. Satan's church is going to be that increasingly, and we are surely able to mark the progress of that in these days. If Antichrist represents supremely that rendering of worship to Satan which Satan so covets, then that is set over against the Christ, which means that Christ supremely represents the worship of God.

The Heart of Worship — Love of the Will of God

In our previous meditations, we have thought much about the rights of God, and that the main issue between Christ and Antichrist is the rights of God. Now then, it is important for us, in connection with that conflict, and in connection with worship, to know what those rights are. Well, all-inclusively we mean, when we speak of God's rights, a state of utter abandonment to God, a state in which everything is for God, where God's pleasure and God's satisfaction is the dominating and captivating consideration; where the mind and heart and will are governed by the good pleasure of the Lord. If the Lord Jesus is the full expression of the worship of God, and if He is the embodiment of all the divine rights, then we can sense the depth of meaning in certain familiar phrases, such as, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him." That is expressive of a life. That encompasses His life, bounds His life; His whole life is crowded into that. What is it that the Father delights in? For Him, that is the governing law and consideration in all His movements, in all His ways, in all His desires, in all His actions. Now, that is worship, and that too is what is meant by the rights of God.

I wonder if it has ever occurred to you how service and worship are, almost without exception, brought together in the Word of God. Go through the Book of Exodus with that thought. The challenge first issued to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go that they may serve me." Then you find that, as that demand and challenge was pressed, it came to take quite a definite shape. Pharaoh said, You that are men go, but leave your flocks and your herds. The answer to that was, We need them to serve the Lord with; and that thought developed until the service of the Lord came clearly to be seen as a matter of worship. And the altar was at the centre of things, and all service was related to the altar, until at length you get the development of the whole Levitical priesthood and order, which was the service of the Lord: and yet it was all a matter of worship. So that Israel, gathered up into the Levites, became a worshipping people, and their worship was their service, and their service to God was worship. Paul takes up that fact in his letter to the Romans, as you know: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your (literally) spiritual worship." Our versions give us the rendering "your reasonable service." Spiritual worship — reasonable service.

We have thought of the service of God as being something other; indeed many things. But the heart of service is worship, and worship is the greatest service. Now this being the case, there are one or two things that we must at once get hold of. The living creation exists for the worship of God, that is, for God's satisfaction, and that is service

to God. Life therefore has to be recognized as a trust, an investment made by God with a view to getting interest, and that interest is His glory. God has given life as an investment, to come back to Him with increase. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." What fruit is that? Well, taking Christ's own illustration in connection with those words, it is the expression and outworking of the life that we have in Christ; for in the vine and the branches, there is but the one life, with its fruit growing and increasing unto the glory of God. That is service. It is the result of the life, the increase of the life. God has given life as an investment.

Worship Demands a Certain State

Now, this worship, this service, demands among other things a certain state. It is based upon a certain spirit. That state is what is meant by the little phrase in John 4, "in spirit." True worshippers must worship in spirit. "They that worship him must worship in spirit..." That is a statement. "In the spirit": that is, in a phrase, living, spiritual union with God. It is something which is inward. You see, that is what the Lord was saying. The woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The Lord Jesus, in effect, said in reply, That which is just external, outward, formal, traditional, is not true worship! True worship is in spirit, and that is something inward. It is not formal, it is not traditional, it is not external: it will come out, it will manifest itself, but it begins, it takes its rise from an inward, living union with God, and that is the result of a miracle, the result of something having happened. No one who has not known the miracle of new birth or resurrection union with the Lord can ever be a true worshipper, but such as have that knowledge, that experience, ought to be true worshippers. That is to say, the thing itself ought to be the basis of worship; it ought to spring up in worship. The very first strain of worship ought to be because of the wonder of that which has happened in us to bring about this living union with our God. Therefore our being joined to the Lord by the initial act of the Holy Spirit ought ever to be fresh as a matter of worship. It ought always to be that which leads to spontaneous praise to the Lord; not just an act of years ago, but that going on in the wonder and glory and blessedness of an abiding reality. I am the Lord's! I am His, He is mine! That is the simple, initial basis of worship, an inward thing. We have to recognize that it is a state that gives rise to worship.

But then, alongside of that, we have to recognize that the enemy of true worship, worship in truth — not only in spirit, but in truth — is in our own souls as apart from that spiritual state. Running alongside that which is "in spirit and in truth," there is always that which is in soul and flesh, in untruth, that which is not true. It is all too easy for the Lord's people to move from one to the other almost without recognizing they have done so. You may get a true, spontaneous uprising of worship that is in spirit and in truth, and then almost imperceptibly move out into another realm and feel that the bottom has fallen out of everything; be carried from your spirit by your emotions, from reality to something that is not real. It is possible among spiritual people to do that, and that very often happens. You will find these two strains in any prayer gathering where there is any number of the Lord's people. You get a true spiritual strain, and then that which is ostensibly or intendedly the worship of the Lord in the same way, but which in reality is something else, something not in spirit, in truth. It has come in along some other line, through some feeling, or some activity of reason. Now I say this not to make things complicated and difficult, but we are trying to get at the matter of true worship. Apart from the double strain which we may find in ourselves or amongst ourselves, you have to recognize that all that appears to be worship is not worship. There is a great deal of what is called worship which is soul worship, and not true worship, not worship in spirit and in truth. It is false. It is not of life, divine life, and therefore it leads away. Oh how this antichrist element, this in man which is according to the spirit of Antichrist, energized and directed by the enemy as it is, does seek all the time to draw away, to lead off, to stop that getting into, and maintaining of, a living touch with God, to interfere with that real hold upon the Lord! It is all very nice, but it has just the opposite effect: it draws away, it lets things down. It is there all the time.

Worship Involves Conflict

Now, by this time we ought to know enough about the difference between soul and spirit, without my adding very much more to it, and it is not to that end that I am saying this. It is to come to this point, that worship enters into the realm of conflict, or shall I put it in the other way, conflict enters into the realm of worship. Here you have the two worships at war with each other, and it is just there that the church comes in. The church is called to be a worshipping vessel. What is worship? It is bringing to God His rights. When the Christ appears on the scene and takes up His supreme business of securing God's rights for Him, immediately Satan appears on the scene, and there is conflict. It is warfare, and warfare right to the end. The church is brought right into that,

into the very purpose for which Christ came, the embodiment of divine rights, the manifestation of divine glory, the bringing to God of that which is His; to be in this universe wholly for the interests of God. Because that is the calling, the vocation and the destiny of the church, all the power of this other one who seeks worship is focused upon the church, as it was focused upon Christ while here in this world. That is the point of conflict with the world, that is the meaning of worldliness, namely, anything which draws away from the Lord, anything which tends to rob God of His rights. To put it the other way, anything which cedes to the Devil worship, upon which his heart is set, that is worldliness.

The church, then, comes into this conflict, and therefore the church has to come in to take up a position strongly and positively in relation to its glorious Head, to bring everything to the Lord, to draw everything to Him. Everything should be drawn toward the Lord when the church is functioning. It should all be coming back to the Lord. There is a great counter movement to draw it all away, to drag it away, to keep it away, and you meet that movement in numerous forms, especially when the church is assembled, with its one object and function to bring to the Lord. You find this counter movement expressed in numerous ways to make that function abortive and unfruitful and a merely formal thing, cold and lifeless. So the church has to take up a militant attitude for worship, and that is why you get priests in the battles of Israel; at Jericho, for example, and in many other instances. You see, the presence of the priestly element means that the worship, the glory, has to go to the Lord: it is all the Lord's rights; this is for the Lord. But it is an army, with priests at the head of it — the militant factor related to worship. Worship can only be fulfilled through conflict. It is a real battle to secure God's rights.

Now, that is presenting truth, but what is the practical meaning of that for us? It means, beloved, that at all times, and perhaps especially when we are found together and our supreme function is worship, we have to set ourselves with deliberateness and positiveness to resist all that would draw away, all those workings of the spirit-principle of Antichrist, and set ourselves so that God shall have His rights, have all that He should have in every time. It calls us into a positiveness. I wonder if you will remember this next time we are together for prayer. I wonder if you remember this every time we meet; for the ministry of the Word is, after all, only worship. If it does not lead to things coming to the Lord for His glory, if it does not mean that the interests of the Lord are furthered, then it has all missed its object.

The Secret of True Worship

Before I close, I do want to say one other thing. Christ Himself is the basis of worship; for, if it is God's pleasure, God's satisfaction, which is in view with worship, what can we bring which will achieve that end? Can you and I of ourselves bring anything that will satisfy God? We know we cannot. Nothing that will satisfy God can be found in us. There is but One concerning whom the Father is able to say, "In thee I am well-pleased." Christ alone answers to all those holy requirements of God. Christ alone can bring satisfaction to the Father. Therefore if the church is to function to that end, the end of God's good pleasure and satisfaction, one thing becomes essential in the church — and when I speak of the church, I speak of the company of individual believers united in one Spirit and one life; the term "individual" does not lose its significance in the Body — if the church is called into that wonderful, heavenly vocation of bringing satisfaction to God and Christ alone can be God's satisfaction, the one essential thing obviously, manifestly, is that Christ will have to supplant us. We shall have to be got out of the way to make way for Christ. Now you see, we come back to our beginning.

If worship is to reach its great climax at the end, if God is going to come right into all His own; if we are nearing that time, if that day is drawing nigh, then it just means this, that God must take pains increasingly to displace that in us upon which Antichrist fastens. Therefore one of the deepest things in the dealings of God with His people toward the end is to make room for Christ, and more room and ever more room for Christ. He is putting us out progressively. He is bringing us to such weakness, such impotence, such helplessness, such inability, such foolishness, that we might well be the laughing stock of the world. We do not know; we cannot do. Is that right? Ought the people of God to be like that? Should it be that of themselves they neither know anything nor can do anything? Well, painful and humbling as the proposition may be to our natures, it is just that; and that is what is meant by losing our souls. But the point at the moment is, What is it for? Just to make room for Christ, to make more room for Christ. It is by what He is that God is going to be glorified; by what God sees in Him, not what man sees in Him. I think that was the thing which lay behind that utterance of His, "The witness which I receive is not from man." "It is another that beareth witness of me". Men may come to their conclusions about Him; they may reach their estimate of Him; they may testify to Him; they may say this and that about Him, but their judgment of Him, whether it be good or bad, is purely a natural judgment, and it is not that that

matters. Oh how utter was Christ! You know, it takes a man with a sinless humanity not to be a little bit satisfied inwardly when someone is passing a good opinion about him, saying something nice, bearing testimony to him that he is something. But He could say, What men think, good or bad, does not touch Me. I know the value of that; I know that that does not go very far; I am not going to take that on; it would put Me in an entirely false position. Today they will cry, Hosanna! Tomorrow they will cry, Crucify! Suppose I had been elated by their cries of Hosanna! where should I be tomorrow? I receive not testimony of men: I live before God.

The great thing is to live before God. Now the Lord is seeking to conform us to that image, that is, to make room for that Christ, with the result that, in Christ having such a large place in us, there is that large measure of pleasure to the Father; and the bringing of that to the Father is worship. Beloved, it is not just what we say in worship; for though our words may be a true and acceptable offering, yet what the Lord is looking for all the time, and what we must ask Him to produce in us, is a true measure of His Son. A life that is an offering acceptable to God is a life in which Christ has a large place. So that genuineness in worship is not merely sincerity of utterance, not our purity of motive, not our intensity of expression, but that which is coming out of a chastened life, out of a broken, contrite spirit; coming out of that which has been emptied, poured out, drained, weakened, bruised, to give place to the Lord, a large measure of Christ. May the Lord have that from us.

That is the church and that is what the Lord is seeking to get in us by His dealings with us, and, strange contradiction as it may seem, it is in that brokenness, that emptiness, that weakness, that bruisedness, that Satan is defeated. Oh! Satan triumphs when there is anything other than that. It is Antichrist providing him with the very kind of humanity or man that he wants, that which is not empty, not broken, not poured out, not selfless. That is Satan's strength.