

## Christ: Sacrifice, Blessor, Centre, Builder, Leader, Judge, Administrator

F. B. Hole.

John 1: 29-51.

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The first chapter of John's Gospel presents to us the Lord Jesus in the most exalted way. We are permitted to travel back in our minds to the most remote moment that we can possibly conceive of, the moment when there began to be the beginning of everything that has had a beginning, and we discover that He whom we know as our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Himself, was there then — the Word who was God, and who was with God. Then He became flesh and tabernacled among us so that those who loved Him might behold His glory and afterwards be able to write and say, "We have heard . . . we have seen with our eyes . . . we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life " (1 John 1). He became audible, visible, tangible, even to men like ourselves, and He brought us the wonderful light of God, which shines for us today. He is the true Light.

The Lord Jesus then, a Man, has appeared amongst us and what wonderful things we have in Him! To begin with, in the verse that I first read, we discover that Jesus, the Word, who became flesh amongst us, is the Lamb of God for the bearing away of the sin of the world. He is presented to us as the great SACRIFICE for sin.

I can well imagine that everybody here is thinking, "Well, we do certainly know something about that; we should not be Christians at all if we did not know the Lord Jesus in that capacity." Still we must remember that the fact is stated in John 1: 29, in all its greatness as God sees it. The point is not merely the taking away of your sins, or my sins, but the fact that He is the great taker-away of sin. In virtue of His sacrifice as the Lamb, God is going ultimately to take away the last vestige of sin and all its results from that great universe which will lie through eternal days beneath His smile.

We pass a little further down the chapter and we discover that He who is the taker-away of sin by becoming the Lamb of sacrifice, is also the BLESSOR. He is the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost, and thus, you see, He is not merely going to take away all the evil, but He is going to bring in all the blessing. He will flood the whole scene with the mighty energy of the Spirit of God. A day is coming when this baptism of the Spirit will affect all things here below, for in the bright millennial age God is going to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. We Christians through infinite grace anticipate that day, for our sins have been forgiven and we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The joys which, thanks be to God, fill the hearts of Christians, are joys which are theirs in virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus is He who has ministered them to us by His Spirit. He has already given the Holy Ghost to us.

Then we read further in the chapter and discover that He who is the Sacrifice and the Blessor, is the God-appointed CENTRE of attraction for all God's people.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew and John and James and they followed Him, as recorded in Matt. 4, it was not the first introduction of these disciples to our Lord. These things happened after John was cast into prison; the things recorded in John 1 happened before that event, and were the very start of that sweet and blessed companionship and communion that was known by these disciples with the Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth. He was set before them by John's remark, "Behold the Lamb of God," and hearing it they left John and followed Jesus. They instinctively discovered that here, not in John the Baptist, great man though he was, but here in the Lord Jesus, the Word become flesh, was the

One worthy to be the great attractive centre for all the people of God. They left John, they followed Jesus, and when challenged by Him they said, Lord, our desire is to know where dwellest Thou? He said unto them, "Come and see"; they came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him.

Come now, my friends, have you discovered that the Lord Jesus is the great attractive centre for the people of God; that God's thought plainly expressed at the beginning and to be realized on a grand scale at the end is to make His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One to whom we are all united and all attracted? He is the all-important and all-sufficient Centre of God's people.

Here we have the beginning, and we might well envy Andrew. We do not know very much about him, for he was not a shining light like his brother Peter whom he afterwards brought to the Lord, yet Andrew has a distinction that is not Peter's. Andrew and another, whoever he may be, possibly the writer of this Gospel, had a great distinction. When we get to those great scenes in glory and the Lord Jesus Christ comes forth in the midst of all the mighty host of His redeemed church, Andrew will be able to say, "Lord, of all the thousands of thousands here to-day, I was the first. It was given to me first of all these countless millions to make the discovery that it is not John the Baptist, and it is not the ancient prophets, and it is not Moses, and it is not Elijah, and it is not my brother Peter, and it is not myself; it is Thyself Lord Jesus, THOU art the attractive Centre, and Thou alone." I hope we have all made this discovery, humbly following in the footsteps of Andrew in that respect.

Christ is the Centre, but when you come to verse 42, you discover from His own words, although He put it in what we might call a somewhat cryptic way, that He is the great BUILDER of that which is going to stand untouched by all the ravages of time. When Peter was brought to Him by Andrew, the Lord Jesus forestalled him, and indicating His divine omniscience, He said in effect, "I know who you are; you are Simon, the son of Jonas, and now I rename you, thereby establishing My ownership, and I call you Cephas, and that means a stone." Possibly Peter thought, What a strange name! Not until the time came recorded in Matthew 16. did Peter get an inkling of what it really signified. Jesus then said, "Thou art Peter," that means a stone — a little piece of stone — and then He said, speaking of Himself, the Son of the Living God, "Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I am going to use a very homely phrase, but use it with reverence, Peter was just a chip of the block. He was not the block, for Christ Himself was the Rock. In John 1 the Lord Jesus was virtually saying to Peter, "Whatever you know or do not know, whatever you realize or do not realize, no matter what you are conscious of or what you are **not** conscious of, coming to Me I annex you for My structure, My building."

The world we live in is like a large ant heap. Oh! what busy builders are the ants, especially when the spring comes, but then that thoughtless cow plants her ugly hoof straight into the middle of the ant hill and there is great consternation. Poor little ants! Why, my dear friends, that has been the history of the world again and again; nations have sprung at each others' throats and the ant hill has been greatly disturbed and the builders have been destroyed. You may even build your "churches," but man himself will knock down what man himself has made and time will make ravages upon all that man builds. Oh! Christian, wake up to it! Christ is the Builder and in the mighty energy of His Holy Spirit He is making more Peters — and there are a good many Peters through grace here tonight — more stones, and yet more stones. Thus quietly, and as silently as Solomon's temple was constructed, He is building. He is the Builder and that which He builds in the energy of His Spirit is the thing that is going to stand, when all man's little "churches" and his best "societies" have died a natural, or it may be an unnatural, death. That which Christ constructs is the thing that counts, for it is the thing that will stand to eternity.

So do not be downhearted if something is going wrong in some little society of your choice,

because the sun will not suffer eclipse if it goes wrong. That which is for Christ and His glory, according to the purpose of God, is never going to be eclipsed, for it will never fail. Christ is the Builder.

The next verse tells us Christ is the LEADER. We had such a wonderful leader for our cause, but he is gone — some may say. The trouble is the years roll on and the leaders go, but Christ said, "Follow Me," as He is our Leader, and He abides for ever.

In verse 47 we discover that Christ is not only the Leader but the JUDGE. When Nathanael came into His presence the Lord showed him that He knew everything about him by saying, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." That is not equivalent to saying "In whom is no sin." Guile is sin it is true, yet there is much sin that is not guile. Guile is hypocrisy, vain pretence, unreality, lack of uprightness and honesty. Nathanael was a man who though a sinner was honest. Beneath the fig tree he had doubtless been confessing his sins to God, and Jesus, knowing that, said, "Here is a true Israelite who is without hypocrisy and not like the rest carrying on their religious ceremonials to keep up appearances." The mass were making believe that all was going on quite well though they had not got the beautiful glory cloud, for the divine presence had left them. Still they kept up a round of religious observances when God was not there, and the power was gone and it was an empty shell without a kernel. Nathanael was not like that; I hope we are not like that. Now the Lord Jesus showed Himself to be the Critic and the all-discerning Judge, and if He approves, well you really need not be much concerned that men blame you.

In the last verse of the chapter we discover that not only is He the Centre of attraction and the Builder and the Leader and the Judge, but He is the great ADMINISTRATOR of the coming age.

A day is coming and our eyes, blessed be God, shall see it, when the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of man shall take the central place in God's mighty universe, angels ascending to him from beneath and descending on Him from above. Angels are now the servants of One who is a Man — "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come," but unto MAN. The prophet had said, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?" Jesus said, "Verily verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." You shall see the Son of man at the central exchange of divine authority; His word is law, His angels do His bidding in all quarters of His universe.

What did He say? In regard to the gathering work that had already commenced in a small way with Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael, and that was going to proceed and enlarge, He said to Nathanael, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." Well, blessed be God, so *we shall*. Could you gather all the children of God in Newcastle together what a large meeting we should have, much larger than this. Could we gather all the children of God in England together — let them roll up in their tens of thousands — what a gathering we should have! Yet it would be a very small affair compared with what is coming. We are going to see greater things than these. We are going to see Christ in His central place of authority, administering in power, and all things subject to Him, and the whole church of God associated with Him in His glory.

Somebody may be saying, "What is the practical good of talking about these things while our surrounding conditions are so distressful?" Why, just this, what we want, is to encourage you to get into real personal, spiritual, prayerful contact, by faith for yourself, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The state of public religion in this land of ours for many a long day has been feeble, because so much of it has been of a secondhand type. The attitude of so many has been, "Let the minister do it for me, let the priest do it for me. Do we not support them, and do they not carry on our religious matters

with God?" Perhaps surreptitiously you rather like it so, because such an arrangement does not put demands upon you. Christian! Christian! you are Christ's one — the very meaning of your name — and you have to do with *your* Lord. *You have to get into contact with Christ, and that is the end of the meetings that we have been holding to-day.*

We aim at persuading you to a little soul concern on this matter. You young Christians, every one of you, see to it that you are concerned not to indulge in a kind of secondhand religion, but to have personal dealings with your Lord. In faith seek it and it will be yours. Knock at this door and it shall be opened, and you will have the privilege of personal heart contact with, and knowledge of, the Lord Jesus Christ, and when you enjoy that, then you will be able to go on.

You will be in touch with the one great Centre, and the great Builder Himself, and this is the secret of being carried through.

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