

Four Views Of Christ (Part 1)

Introduction

John W. Ritenbaugh

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This next series of sermons are going to be somewhat different, but as you will see, I think this series fits into both of the preceding sermons. There was the sermon on the animals a couple of weeks ago, and then last week's sermon on the miracles. I hope that by the time we are done with this series, it will prove to be faith-building and at the same time practical, unlocking some otherwise difficult-to-understand sections to our understanding. Of course, above all, I hope it will increase our understanding and faith, and will produce a great deal more Christ-like obedience.

I Corinthians 1:18-20 For the message of the cross is foolishness [or nonsense] to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Paul says the Bible is written and his sermons were not of words of human wisdom. In one sense, this series of sermons is going to be about the book itself. I am talking about the Bible. The Bible is not written like other books. On the one hand, it is a simple and straightforward presentation of a message—the gospel of the Kingdom of God. However, it is not written in the usual arrangement of books, in that the information is not layered with one piece directly following another. It is written like a mystery story with all of its important threads and pieces of information scattered throughout the book. Thus, we have the principle of here a little, there a little, as Isaiah put it.

In addition to that, there are quite a number of story threads. There is one main thread—the gospel—but there are an awful lot of other story threads. Each one of them is reasonably important to the overall picture. But each thread feeds into the overall storyline and adds to the clarity of the whole.

Complicating that is that though the Bible has in reality only one Author, yet that one Author used around thirty men over a span of about fifteen hundred years and inspired this to be written in three different major languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

God allowed just enough of these men's personality to show through each book so that, though we can see a similarity, their styles were obviously different and with the subject material, though it is similar to what is in other books, there is just enough difference so that it challenges your ability to understand it.

These men used all kinds of ploys to teach. They used allegories, parables, similes, metaphors, figures of speech and idioms, but they came mostly from their own time and their own environment. Sometimes, we are totally unfamiliar with the cadence of their writing and their syntax as well.

If that does not make it difficult enough, there is a great deal of symbolism and types contained within it, which must be grasped if a clear understanding is going to be gained. On top of that, the Bible itself says it takes a certain childlike attitude, patient perseverance, and obedience before the message can get through. I have not even mentioned the fact that God has to call us.

Understanding it though does not require a high degree of intellect. Many, in their vanity, discount its simplicity. They see something, they see that it is simple, and it is beneath them. So they reject the authority with a stubborn blindness, that as we just read here, God calls foolishness or nonsense.

The Bible is simple only when it is explained by someone gifted by God to teach it. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch and the exclamation he made to Philip in Acts 8? He was going along in his chariot and was reading out of

the book of Isaiah, and God sent Philip to come right up along side of him and start questioning him about what he was reading. The eunuch said to him, "How can I understand unless somebody guides me?"

Well, the world lacks a great deal of guidance. Even though the Bible is simple, the Bible is the most profound book that has ever been written. Its profundity is something that requires us to give it something if we are going to glean from it the depth or dimension of what is in it, that God wants us to have. There are unsearchable riches within its words if we are willing to give to it, i.e., the finding of it, the discovering of it, the searching of it out that it is going to require.

You might recall that in the end of my sermon last week, I showed you from II Thessalonians 2, that what is going to separate those who are going to be saved from those who are going to perish, is something that is a matter of the heart. Throughout all of history, as God is calling people, He is revealing His truth to them. Before this whole purpose that God is working out runs its course, everybody is going to have truth revealed to them! They are going to have sufficient truth revealed to them that will enable them to be saved.

But why do those who are going to perish, perish? It is because they do not love truth. It is because they do not love what is revealed to them. It is not that it is not revealed. It is not even that they do not accept it, because they might accept it as being truth. **But they do not love it!** You know very well that if you love something, you are going to give yourself to it

What happens—what is the effect of your loving something? We are going to look at a verse that shows this very clearly. It is in Song of Solomon, a book about love. It shows very clearly what a human will do when they love something. The love that is being revealed in these verses is the love of a man for a woman. But the principle holds true for anything that one loves. It could just as well be the love of a woman for a man, or it could be the love of any human for an inanimate object.

Notice what Solomon says to his beloved:

Song of Solomon 7:1-7 How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the

work of the hands of a skillful workman. [That workman was God.] Your navel is a rounded goblet; it lacks no blended beverage. Your waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes like the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; a king is held captive by your tresses. How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights! This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters.

It is a mark of love to dwell on the perfections of a beloved object. Was Solomon taking notice of this young lady? Did he just give her a glance or did he *really scrutinize* and look into the perfections and dwell upon the perfections, on the beauties, that his eye was beholding? Of course he did. That is the principle that is involved here.

If somebody really loves someone or if somebody really loves something, they are going to give their attention to it. They are going to study it so carefully they can describe every nuance of what it is that they desire. They will see its beauties and they will love those beauties very deeply. So we have an example of this. The principle is very important to understand.

Let us take that principle and apply it to God's Word and remember what it says in II Thessalonians 2:10, that what is going to separate the saved from those who are perishing is a love of the truth. Those who love the truth are going to look into the perfections. They are going to desire God's Word. They are going to desire to comprehend and understand. They are going to look for every nuance of what makes it beautiful and understand it. If there is going to be a love of God's Word and a love of truth, then we are going to spend some time looking into the beauties, the details, the profundities of God's Word. We are not just going to pass it by.

Let us look at another principle that is involved here, in the book of Revelation. That principle we were just talking about can be applied to virtually anything. I know that from time to time, you listen to the radio, you listen to talk programs, maybe you watch some of them on television. Or

maybe you listen to or watch game shows on television. They have people on those game shows that seem to know every bit of trivia there is about any given subject. How did they get that in their head? Well, they gave themselves over to it. That is why they have it in their heads.

I have listened to talk radio programs here in Charlotte. One I hear every once in a while is an all sports program. Every so often, someone gets on there and they know virtually everything there is to know about a given athlete. They can tell you what his batting average is, what his completions average is, how tall he is, how much he weighs, how many games he played in last year. They can remember every error the man made during the previous year. They can remember every hit. They can just go through a whole mess of things. I know that you have heard these things. You have heard people on radio or television or in person describe many, many events from some personality's life. Why do the people do this? There is a desire within them to look into the details of this person's existence.

A lot of it, of course, maybe 99% of it, is a waste of time. But the principle is what I am trying to get across to you here. The principle that shows clearly what it means to **love truth!** If we love truth, we are going to give ourselves over to it and we are going to be looking for every aspect of its beauty. Its beauty is contained in its truth. That is what's important there.

Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.

Hidden manna? What does manna symbolize in God's Word? John 6 makes this pretty clear. It is compared there to the Word of God, both personified in Jesus Christ and also—in terms of it being the literal word of God that appears on the pages of a book—manna being something that fed, strengthened, and preserved the lives of the children of Israel in their wilderness journey. Of course, I think you can begin to see the type that is there, the symbolism that is there.

Now, think back on the Israelites experience with manna. In their experience it was something that was easily found. Every morning, except for the Sabbath, they got up and there it was. It was right out there on the ground.

There was nothing hidden about it at all. They just had to walk out there and pick it up, and when they got their full omer they were done for the day. No effort had to be made other than the fact that they had to get themselves out of their tents and go out on the ground and pick it up. Nothing hidden, nothing mysterious at all about it.

But this manna that Christ is talking about is hidden. It is not something that is right out on the surface. It is not something that one just has to roll out of the cot and roll out onto the ground and there it is. This is something that one is going to have to search for. He says here that it is available only to those who overcome.

What it looks like here to me is that this suggests a special blessing that comes to those who persevere and obey. They make the effort, they persevere, and they obey. Hidden, yes it is. It is not something that is right on the surface. If we are going to be fed spiritually, then everything is not going to be just right out in front of us where all we have to do is just reach out and pluck it off. There are going to be things that are part of God's Word that are going to require a great deal of effort for us to find it. But it is a special blessing. God will give the overcomers that which is hidden.

Hidden though it is, **it is there!** God wants us to know that. I can guarantee you that when God reveals something like this to us because we have been looking, it is not going to be difficult to understand. Maybe it will not even be exceedingly important in terms of salvation. It might be something that we do not even need for salvation at all. But it *will* be very helpful in giving us a greater depth of wisdom and understanding. It will be faith-building and will help to fulfill what God is making of us.

There is a purpose for all of this and I want you to turn to Ephesians 3. I am going to read this to you from the Revised English Bible. It is not all that different, but the cadence of the words that are used, I think, is superior.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (REB) With this in mind then, I kneel in prayer to the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that out of the treasures of His glory, He may grant you inward strength and power through His Spirit, that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and

firm foundations may you, in company with all of God's people, be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you be filled with the very fullness of God.

It is beautiful! Here is the purpose for what God has written. Some of it is right on the surface. A great deal of its beauty is hidden. Actually, I think most of its beauty is hidden. It is something that has to be dug for. But its purpose is that Christ may dwell in us. This book, the Bible, is a revelation of His mind as He participated in this creation and as He directs it toward the conclusion of His purpose.

Most of this paragraph that I just read to you is written in the present, continuous tense. So what Paul is showing is what we are involved in is a process. Education, whether it be with God or in this world, is not something that comes all at once. It is something that is progressive. It has a beginning. It has a purpose. As we mature, as we begin to look in deeper and deeper, what we find adds to what we already have. So it is cumulative in its effect. That is what Paul is saying here.

The glory that is being spoken of *is the revelation of His perfection*. You may not understand or think that this is very important, but it is *very* important to you and me. What God is gradually revealing of Himself to you and me is a clearer, brighter, more beautiful focus on His image, which we need if we are going to be conformed or transformed from the glory of man to the glory of God.

This salvation process in which we are involved is *not* one-sided. God is not doing everything. God is requiring things of you and me, and part of the requirement *is that we make effort to dig into the beauties of His Word*. As we do these things, the image keeps coming clearer and clearer and we have a better vision of what we are to yield to and become.

This paragraph also tells us that we are enabled to do this by the Holy Spirit. What we are enabled to do is, unfortunately in most English Bibles, called, "comprehend." "Comprehend" means, in English, something a little bit different from the Greek. In English, "comprehend" means "understand." But the Greek word means "lay hold on." It means to "seize." It means to

"grasp!" Can you see what Paul is getting at here? We are enabled by the Holy Spirit to grab on to the glory of God! He is showing that it requires effort on our part. God is not going to force it on us. We have to cooperate with Him in it. The way we cooperate is studying His Word and coming to appreciate this beauty. That expands, broadens, deepens, clarifies, sharpens, and details the beauty of what God is.

Paul was telling us that the Holy Spirit enables us to seize, or take possession of, or make as our own, the glories of God. He tells us in verse 18, "That we may be able to comprehend with all the saints." That little phrase, "all the saints," is very interesting in that it is showing that it is not something that is limited to a select few, but is something that is available to anybody who has the Spirit of God.

Remember I told you earlier this is not something that requires a great deal of intellect. What it requires is persistence, perseverance, a willingness to put oneself and one's time at the disposal of learning by searching into and giving ourselves over to, because we love it! This is so important!

Gradually what occurs is that we begin to be transformed into the image of what we are reading, what we are studying, because it becomes part of our thinking processes. We are what we think. We are what we eat spiritually. This is why the manna is so important, why Christ is identified as the manna of the New Testament and why the Word of God is identified as the true manna of the New Covenant. But He is warning us that not everything is right on the surface. There are things that have to be dug for. So this, that He wants us to grasp, is the common property of anyone who has the Spirit of God.

Another way of looking at this, as to why it is important, is because every one of us is capable of understanding something without grasping the full implications of what it is we understand. For example, we understand the purpose God is working out. But we do not understand all its implications, do we? We understand that we are going to be born of God and that we are going to be God. But we do not grasp the full implication of that.

We understand that our sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ. But we do not grasp, we really have not seized yet, the full implication of that.

That is something that comes by continually looking into God's Word. Gradually, the fullness of what it is we understand but do not fully grasp, becomes greater and greater and more and more important.

The fullness, as far as humanity is concerned, is described in Ephesians 4:13. I will just give you one line and you will recognize it right away. "To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." God then wants us to be measured against Christ as a man, not Christ as God.

As we continue trusting—because faith is mentioned here (and this is really interesting)—Christ feels more at home dwelling in us. Now think about that. Just think about the implications of that. We would not ordinarily think of Christ feeling uncomfortable being a part of our life. But He is! This verse is telling us that He feels uncomfortable being a part of our life if we are not living up to what we should be living up to. I think you can understand that. You feel uncomfortable being around certain people.

As we begin to take on more and more of His image, He feels more at home there! He feels that He is welcome there. He feels that He is a part of that person's life. We show our trust by obedience.

What I have just given you, I have given by way of an introduction to what is coming in order to help us all see the purpose of what I am going into here and why it is important. I owe a large measure of this series of sermons from a small paperback book. It was first published in 1853. I think people had more time back then to give their minds over to things like this. The title of the book is *Four Views of Christ* and was written by Andrew Jukes, who was a Scot. I do not know what denomination he was, but the man had a very keen insight into the types and the symbols of the Bible. So I have taken many things from what he has written, rearranged things in my own order and updated the things into more modern understanding. If any of you can find that book, I think you will find it very helpful to your understanding of what we are going into here.

Let us go back to the beginning of the Bible, to Genesis 2. I can understand more and more why Mr. Armstrong kept going back to the first couple of chapters of Genesis. Everything begins there, that is why. If you want to get back to the beginning, you have to go back to the beginning.

Genesis 2:10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

The Bible's use of symbolism and allegory is both interesting and instructive. It would be very easy for one to read this verse and not think any more of it. "Well isn't that interesting. Four rivers there, coming from one." But with the help of other portions of the Bible, which gives us an understanding of types, this verse can become much more instructive than what it literally says. There is a great deal that is hidden here.

I have chosen this because I think it is something we all can relate to very clearly. First of all water, we all understand, is a symbol of God's Spirit. Remember John 7:37-39, where Jesus said, "Out of this person's belly shall flow rivers of living waters." And then John went on to explain it. "This spoke He of the Holy Spirit which was not yet given." Water is a symbol of God's Spirit.

Physical water is life giving, cleansing, refreshing, and it is also a great source of power if it is in sufficient volume and it is moving. Now think of all these things as you relate it to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has to be moving if it is going to do any work, any real work. The movement is from God's throne out to us, back out to others and back to God's throne. There is a circuit that is completed here.

Notice how God describes in this verse the water as having one source. The implication in its context is the place where one has access to God. Adam and Eve were there, the progenitors of all the human family, and where they had access to God was in Eden. In type, that is where God is dwelling and that is where the water was flowing out from. But, the water divided four ways (remember that) and then men could partake of this water's qualities and thus receive its benefits.

The verse in no way limits man's sources of water, nor does it state anything about quality of other waters. God is not saying that every river, every source of water had its source from this. It only says there was a river coming out of Eden and it divided four ways. We know that was not the only source of water that was available on earth. That is very important. We know, again

from other sources in the Bible, that there were other rivers besides these that also offered benefits, but there was only one source of water that came from the place of God's habitation.

God compares His Word to water and spirit, manna and food. There is a great deal of teaching there. We have shifted the symbol (or the type) just momentarily from water to the Word. God compares His Word to water. He compares His Word to manna. He compares His Word to spirit. He compares His Word to food.

Let us summarize the lesson here that you can get from understanding types and symbols. We must be very careful of the source from which our water is to come, to make sure it comes from the place where there is access to God, so that we do not limit our true spiritual growth or even be poisoning ourselves to death.

Let us drag this out a little bit further right from the book of Genesis and go to chapter 21. This subject all by itself is worthy of a great deal of study. In Genesis 21 we have the story of Hagar and Ishmael leaving Abraham.

Genesis 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.

It is interesting the word wilderness appears. That has symbolism as well.

Genesis 21:15-19 And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And then she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

There is some teaching here. We add a couple of more types or symbols. These things, again, come right out of God's Word in other portions of it. There is a lesson here. There is instruction. Those who trust in bottles—can you understand what a bottle is? A bottle, in this context, is a very limited supply of water. You think of that in terms of God. You think of that in terms of His Spirit. You think of that in terms of Genesis 2:10, where the water was coming from the right source—it is implied there that it is unending. There is no deficiency of refreshment, strength, or cleansing properties—life giving properties—that come from God's Spirit. But when men try to contain things and put it in bottles, spiritually, there is not only a very limited supply, but they cannot even see the well, where there is a great deal more water.

It says there in the Hebrew that God had to open her eyes to see it. It was right **there** and she did not see it. Think of that in terms of all the people who have access to the Word of God in the United States of America. The well of water is right in their house. I am talking about the Holy Bible. I am talking about the beginning of access to God. I am talking about the beginning of a relationship with the true source of what it is that gives refreshment and cleansing and life—the kind of life that will end in eternal life. *And people cannot even see what it is they have in their house!* They have a very limited supply of the kind of water, in type, that will lead to eternal life. What happens is they are on a desert. They are in the wilderness. They do not have the spiritual strength that is essential to live. What happens if we do not have it? We soon die without it.

Water plays a very significant role in the lives of people in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 26:17-22 Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them. Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the

name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also. So he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Genesis 26:32 It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water."

I want you to notice something as we go by here. I think you all understand that Isaac was a type of Christ. If we would go through all the chapters that have to do with Abraham and Isaac, I think you would be very surprised to see how much wells of water had to do with their well-being. God led them to wells of water.

What did the world do? The world tried to steal them. The world tried to plug them up. God is showing a form of persecution. The elect, He is showing, have access to the wells God supplies while the world tries to stop up—persecute—so we cannot drink from them.

Here comes the lesson. Are we making the best use of the wells available to us while there is time, or are we drinking freely of the world's wells? This is why God draws so much attention to water and wells, to water and its source. *What are we taking into our mind? What are we allowing to go in there?* Because what goes in is what we are going to think with! What goes in is going to determine very much what our attitudes are. What goes in is very much going to determine what our image of God is going to be like. What goes in is going to determine what our character is like. This is no unimportant type or symbol. There is profound (in terms of its meaning) instruction just in this one type.

Those are questions you are going to have to answer yourself. It is something I cannot answer for you. It is something I cannot do much about. I can only point out how important this one type is to understanding what God requires of us in regard to what we put into our mind.

There are four accounts of Jesus' ministry, but there is only one source. We need to ask this question: Is each of these accounts merely supplementary? Is the one just corroborating what the other has already written? They indeed do this, but is that their chief purpose? I think you understand I am talking about the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Is it possible that the chief purpose of those books is to show Christ in certain, distinct relationships? Each account is in fact a biography. Biographers of famous people frequently show the people whose lives they are writing about in certain, distinct relationships.

One biographer may concentrate on a person's public life, while mentioning only incidentally their family life. Another, writing on the same person, may concentrate on their technical skills or their personality, while they barely touch on another aspect of that person's life.

For example, let us look briefly at the man Benjamin Franklin. This was a man of great mental capacity. Apparently he was a very hard working individual. He had very wide, broad, varying interests and became accomplished in quite a number of areas. If you were a biographer, what would you write about if you wanted to write something that was pretty complete about this man's life? Would you write about his inventive skills? Would you write about his political accomplishments? Would you write about his diplomatic life?

Would you write about when he was a writer and publisher of a newspaper? Would you write on the wisdom of that sage, Benjamin Franklin? Would you write about Benjamin Franklin, the family man? He had seventeen kids, you know. Which one would you write about? Would you write about all of them? If you wrote about all of them, you would really be writing a real tome. It would be quite difficult.

Generally, what biographer's tend to do, they will focus on one specific area and then they will just give supplementary material—maybe just barely touch on the other areas of the person's life. But if you only had access to one biography of Benjamin Franklin, I think you would agree from just what you know about him, you would very likely have a very incomplete biography of the man's life.

Is God's history of His Son any less vast in scope? Surely the length and breadth and depth and height of the mind and accomplishments of Jesus Christ so far exceed Benjamin Franklin that there is no comparison between the two. So God's Word is presented here a little, there a little, and each part adds to our understanding and our ability to serve and to glorify Him. In order to really grasp, seize, lay hold of Jesus Christ, so that we can become more like Him and have a clearer picture of what He is like, we need *many* streams!

In reality, the biography of Jesus Christ as it pertains to you and me is not limited to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All that is a biography of His public ministry while He was a man. The whole book is a biography of Jesus Christ. There are many streams that are available to us.

Matthew 24:23-26 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it."

Christ's warning to you and me is that imposters are going to arise. They will come. Now *who* is not going to be deceived? It is going to be those who have the best grasp of Christ. It is those whose grasp of Jesus Christ is not limited like other people's are. Those who see the most of Him, they will know that this is not of Him.

Even when we look physically at something, we are frequently limited by our perspective. Perspective is usually described as the angle at which you are looking at something, or the position from which you are looking at something.

Remember the story of the three blind men who were asked to identify what it was they were touching? All were touching the same thing. It was an elephant, but each was on a different part of it. One had hold of the tail and he described it as a rope. One had hold of a leg and he described it as a tree. The other had hold of the trunk and he described it as a snake. From their

perspective, that is what they thought. *None of them* saw the whole thing and each, from his limited perspective, was *totally wrong!*

You see the point of what Christ is getting at here? We are coming up on the most deceptive period of time that has ever hit the earth. By deceptive I mean spiritually deceptive. Those whose grasp of Jesus Christ is limited are going to be the ones who are going to be the most vulnerable during that period of time, the ones who are most likely going to be deceived, fooled, and are going to be falling into the trap of the anti-Christ. Christ says that it is going to be so difficult to discern that it might even be possible for the very elect to be deceived. We better have a pretty good grasp of Jesus Christ and the purpose He is working out, the way He is working it, and through whom He is working it.

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. . .

The purpose of the ministry is to equip. They are a tool or a means through which the Christian is equipped to serve God. We have the Spirit of God, so the enabling power is there. God recognizes our human frailties and so He gives gifts to certain individuals that are a part of His church, to guide and teach the others. So, the purpose of the ministry is:

Ephesians 4:12-13 For the equipping of the saints for work of the ministry, for the edifying [it means the building up] of the body of Christ [the church] till we all come to the unity of the faith [We are not unified yet. Does that shock you?], and the knowledge of the Son of God. . .

In fact, we may never be unified as long as we are human. The unity will come in the Kingdom of God. But until then, there are going to be differences that are going to separate us.

Ephesians 4:13-16 To a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by

the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting [by which they lie in wait to deceive], but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

This is what we are in the process of doing. Before we can come to the image of Christ, we must first see it. Think on that. Remember what I said before—this is not something God is doing alone. This is something He requires of us, that we do what we can to enhance the image because we become what we think about. Before we can become what God wants us to become, we have to first see it. Then we can begin, with the help of God, working on duplicating it in our lives.

Remember the series of sermons I gave on the offerings? I have not given them for a number of years, and I am going to have to give them sometime not too far in the future. But each one of the offerings of Leviticus 1-5 was symbolic and descriptive of the life, work, and attitudes of the one offering, Jesus Christ.

I understand that the Treasury Department teaches its agents to spot counterfeit money by having them study the real thing. They do not study counterfeits. They study the real thing. The reason is that there are so *many* counterfeits available they would never stop studying counterfeits. But what you do, you look at the real thing and get it so firmly in mind, and then *immediately* you can spot a counterfeit because it does not conform to the right image. The principle is simple.

It is the principle God intends we use with the Bible. You keep going over and over and over the image until finally the picture is there. When the picture is there we can give ourselves over to duplicating it in our lives. The more we can see that picture, the better off we are going to be. Like I said before, even though it may not be essential to salvation, it is essential to giving us a greater depth of understanding. It gives us a better chance to imitate our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:6-8 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Each early writer saw in the gospels four representations of the same life. These four creatures were symbolic of a different account of that life. Each one of these animals and the man there is a representation of Christ, and each one of and by itself is incomplete, but an essential part of our understanding of the man Jesus Christ.

The cherubim were awesome angelic beings of and by themselves. You can see them described more thoroughly in Ezekiel 1 and 10. But as it is being used here in Revelation 4, they are merely symbols of a greater Being. That being is Jesus Christ. Their purpose is to reveal His glory. Remember that and connect it with Ephesians 3, about the glory of God.

Let us begin to weave this together by going back to Numbers 2. Numbers is largely a chronicle of the wilderness events. It begins by numbering the tribes and giving certain information about their journey through the wilderness. Chapter 2 contains information regarding the order of progression as they marched through the wilderness. Things were done in an orderly manner. Individuals did not just walk, march, or trudge through the wilderness in a haphazard way. The tribes were lined up in a very definite direction. There were three tribes on each side of the tabernacle whenever they camped.

Whenever they camped, the tabernacle was in the middle, the twelve tribes were around it and there were three tribes on each side. Each set of tribes had a leader, a leading tribe. The tribe that led the twelve tribes was the tribe of Judah. They marched first in order.

It is very interesting, but Judah had on its banner—do you know what a banner is? A banner is a flag. We might call it a standard. Today we might call it a crest. We might call it a coat of arms. Families have a coat of arms. Some families have standards, crest, banners, or flags. Nations have flags. On a flag are representations of things that are important to the heritage of that nation. In the United States our flag is red, white, and blue. Those colors represent things. The red represents the blood of people who made our liberties possible, shed in war. The white represents the purity of our intentions. And the blue represents the courage that it took to forge a nation and to carry it forward.

Each one of the tribes of Israel had a banner that carried on it an emblem of something that was important to their heritage. The tribe of Judah had the banner of a lion. Can you begin to see something taking place here? Connect it with Revelation and the first thing mentioned there was the lion, and you will find that in Numbers 2:3-9. Beginning in verse 10 carrying through verse 17 was the next group of three that was led by Reuben. Reuben's banner, crest, or coat of arms pictured a man.

The next was the group led by Ephraim (the tribes of Joseph) and you will find that their banner was an ox. Everyone has heard of Johnny Bull. Somehow the epithet has carried through. The fourth group was led by the tribe of Dan and their coat of arms was an eagle. There you have the types.

Jewish tradition is one of the sources for what was on the banners that these lead tribes carried. However, there is stronger evidence than that, because the Bible gives indications that these are correct. You can look these up later on if you want. Judah in Genesis 49:9, describes Judah as a "lion's whelp." Ephraim, in Deuteronomy 33:17, says, "He shall push . . . " as an ox. Reuben in Genesis 30:14 carries the story of the mandrakes. Did you notice? The *mandrakes*. That is not proof in itself and is one the weaker identifications. And then there is Dan, the eagle. This almost entirely comes out of tradition, but Genesis 49:17, in one source that I looked in said there is the possibility that can be translated (where it talks about the viper biting the horse's heel) the viper and the flying serpent, which is kind of interesting.

There is, again, more symbolism here, because Israel itself was intended to be a banner. I mean the whole nation was intended by God to be a banner. In this case, a banner is a flag, it is a sign, it identifies. Israel was supposed to do something before the world. They were to witness that their God is God. That was the banner or the purpose through which God was going to identify Himself to the world. The obedience of Israel was to point to (or identify) their God.

You can look in Deuteronomy 4:5-8 where it shows very clearly it was going to be their obedience to the Torah, the Word of God, the law of God, the instruction or teaching of God by which Israel became a manifestation, a witness, a banner, a sign, or a standard that others were to rally around.

Next week we will begin to identify the characteristics of the four animals before we begin to get into the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.