

Four Views Of Christ (Part 2)

Introduction, cont.

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The major objective of this series (which began with last week's sermon) is to be an exercise in what a person does whenever he loves something very dearly. What happens is if a person loves something very dearly, he has a desire for it. In this case, he is going to make *every* effort he can to study into every detail of the object that is loved.

I gave you a couple of illustrations I think anybody ought to be able to relate to. If somebody really loves entertainment, they are going to be looking into all that they can find out about entertainment figures. They are going to be a fan of somebody. They are going to know the birth date of this person who is the object of their desire. They are going to know what kind of food they like, how tall they are, how heavy they are, and all the movies they have been in. They know whether they starred or whether they co-starred, who was with them, and on and on and on it goes.

The same principle holds true for anyone who likes athletics. If they like football, baseball, or golf, they are going to know everything about it they possibly can. They are going to spend their time studying into these things, thinking about it, thinking how maybe they can make use of it, because they admire, they respect, and they would like to participate in that sport, maybe to a greater degree than they already do.

What it means, of course, is the person gives himself over to that which he loves, that which he desires. This is important to you and me because we saw in II Thessalonians 2 that what is going to play a large part in distinguishing those who are being saved from those who are perishing, in the perilous times to come, is a love of the truth.

Now it is not just that those being saved merely have the truth, but rather that they *love* the truth, while those who are perishing may have even accepted the truth as being true, but they are not dedicated to it. Thus they make little or no effort to make it a part of their lives.

One of Christianity's major premises is that the Christian must live his life by faith. That is, upon belief in God and in God's way, it must be strong enough that one willingly, purposefully, and with forethought conducts his life submitting to God's will.

What we are doing here is one of those exercises that strengthens faith, enabling one to have a better foundation with more reason for living God's way, because the more one knows about God, the more one wants to know Him and wants to be able to meet Him personally.

What we are involved in is a process that feeds on itself. You have heard of growing in love? Sure you have. You know that it works in terms of relationships with maybe your mate. You know that there was a time when you did not know that person. Then there was a time when you only knew the person casually and you had a desire to get to know them better. So you made an effort to get to know this person better. As you got to know them better, you were drawn together and love was growing. The process was working.

It does not always work that way. Sometimes you find out you are not well matched with that person and the desire wanes and you go your separate ways. But with God, with such an awesome personality, there is so much about Him that is good and wonderful and a joy to be around—what we are involved in is a process that will grow.

Last week I laid a foundation to begin to show that in the four gospel accounts, each one has a dominating theme which shows Christ in a particular relationship to God's purpose. The model for this came out of Revelation 4 and the cherubim that are briefly described there. Each cherub has four faces. One is the face of a lion, the other face is an ox, the other face is a man, and the fourth face is an eagle.

According to Jewish tradition, these were also the symbols for the coat of arms of the lead tribes of Israel on their journey through the wilderness. Judah was the lion. Ephraim was the ox. Reuben was the man. Dan was the eagle.

Remember that Israel's journey through the wilderness is a type of our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God. There is guidance here for you and me. To the Israelites, the journey appeared to be purposeless wandering, but from God's perspective there was purpose in everything He led them into. That purpose was not just for their personal benefit, but rather God was making a record for us to follow. It was for our benefit that these things were written.

These four tribes were the tribes around which each group of tribes rallied. The standard (or the banner) which they carried, each group was to follow on the journey. To us, then, the spiritual application is that the characteristics of each coat of arms are to give us guidance on our pilgrimage. They represent the dominant theme, the most basic element, of what we need to rally our lives around in the biographies of Christ's ministry.

We got to the point in that sermon where I was going to show a few characteristics of these four themes. An interesting sidebar to each one of these figures is that each is used in both a good and bad sense in Bible. There are some of these symbols that are used only in a good sense, like a dove. Did you ever see anywhere in the Bible where a dove was used in a bad sense? I do not know of any. But all of these are used in both good and bad senses. We are going to be using them all in a good sense because each and every one of them is used to describe a facet of Christ's personality. We are to learn from that.

Revelation 5:5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

Notice there that Christ is directly called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah".

I might interject at this point that this is the kind of sermon where I probably will not be doing a great deal of expounding of any particular scripture, but rather we are going to be turning to quite a number of scriptures so we can

begin to make comparisons. The first comparisons are to show how these figures are being used. Then we are going to begin to focus in on the book of Matthew and his dominant theme. We will then begin to look at what is distinctive about the book of Matthew.

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Remember these things about the offspring of David. Remember David was from the tribe of Judah. Remember David is the type, the model king, after which the Messiah is going to be patterned.

We have gone from Revelation 5:5, where Christ is called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." Now we have associated Him as having been the offspring of David—the root and the offspring of David, the bright and the morning star.

Hosea 11:10 They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west.

Here is a comparison of a characteristic of a lion. A lion, when it roars (I have never heard one in person), but it must be a very arresting sound, especially if you are out in the jungle and the lion is not caged up anywhere. It is dark and you do not know exactly where you are. To hear a lion roar is something that would probably make our hair rise on the back of our neck. God here is compared—that is, His anger, His warning—to the roar of a lion.

In these next verses, God is talking about His relationship with Israel, continued from chapter 11.

Hosea 13:7-8 So I will be to them like a lion; like a leopard by the road I will observe them; I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage, and there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them.

I am giving you Bible descriptions of the characteristics of a lion. Remember what I said about it being used in both a good and a bad sense. We are applying this to God and everything about God is good. Even when God rips and tears, even when He consumes like a lion would consume, it is actually for people's good. Remember, Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

These are things that we do not necessarily like to think about Christ. But there is an aspect of His rulership that shows what? We will get to that in just a minute.

Psalm 108:8 Gilead is Mine; Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.

This is in remembrance of, or reflecting back upon, Revelation 22:16, where Jesus is the Root and the Offspring of David. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is shown here as being the owner of Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah is His lawgiver.

One more reference in regard to the lion, one that we have mentioned before. But we will see it back in Genesis 49. Jacob is giving the blessings to and prophesying about his children.

Genesis 49:8-9 Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies [that denotes rulership, authority]; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?

Regardless of which sense a lion is used in, there is a majestic, fierce, and terrorizing aura about this. We will not turn to Amos 3, but in verse 6 he says, "The lion has roared and who shall not hear?"

Now, in a good sense, the lion symbolizes power, courage, eminence, kingdom, firmness, and even wisdom—sagacity. They are pretty good

hunters. In this symbol, expect to see Christ portrayed as Son of Abraham through David, in connection with ruling and kingdom. We will give further explanation as we go along here.

What about the ox? Let us go to I Corinthians 9. Paul is quoting from the Old Testament.

I Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about?

You are going to begin to see a description of an animal noted for work. An ox works.

Proverbs 14:4 Where no oxen are, the trough is clean [An ox is a working animal. It is productive. It produces profit. It produces gain.]; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.

The picture is beginning to come clear here. We are seeing a different relationship altogether from the lion.

Hosea 10:11 "Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain; but I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a plow. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods."

It is interesting to note that one particular tribe, or one particular group of tribes, depending on how that prophecy there is interpreted, is associated with an ox. If you connect that to Proverbs 14:4, and just think about the prophetic fulfillment of these things, who are the two richest tribes of the kingdom of Israel? It is the tribes of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh. They are the ones God pictures as an ox. There is much increase in the strength of an ox. Productive people.

Now one more place. Let us go to Deuteronomy 33. This will be the last scripture on the ox.

Deuteronomy 33:17 His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns like the horns of the wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

We have not looked at other scriptures in which either ox or bulls are mentioned in, and again, the ox or the bull is used in both a good and a bad sense. But even in a bad sense, some of the same characteristics come through. But as a domesticated animal, it is noted for its strength, especially in terms of endurance.

Any of you who are familiar with the settling of the west will recognize that whenever the settlers headed west, they very rarely ever pulled their wagons with a horse. They pulled their wagons with oxen. The oxen were stronger over a longer period of time than a horse. A horse would give out. As strong and sleek as they are, they do not have the combination of strength and endurance, being able to bear the hardships that an ox is able to. So an ox then portrays—pictures, typifies—strength, especially in terms of endurance. As applied to Christ, expect to see Him in patient, untiring service and labor in behalf of others.

The next figure is the man. In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let Us make in Our image according to Our likeness." Here is the figure of the way a man is used, as it applied to Christ, already beginning to show forth. Man is in the image of God.

I Corinthians 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Something is beginning to take shape here. Man, of all the creatures of the earth, is the only one that has characteristics like God. He not only has a human spirit that enables him to be somewhat in the image of God, but man alone of all the creatures of the earth is capable of receiving another spirit that will magnify and intensify the image of God in the man. That of course is the Holy Spirit of God.

Back again to Hosea, this time in chapter 11. Again, God is talking about His relationship to Israel.

Hosea 11:4 I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them.

I used that verse because I want you to see a relationship here between God and man. Man is an intelligent being with a spirit that shares with God many of His characteristics and feelings. Have you ever felt this way toward somebody? Compassion, mercy, concern, desire. Can you think of an animal that is capable of these kinds of characteristics, that is part of their personality? At least some of them might have it in a very shallow way, but nobody is able to have characteristics like God except the man. We are concerned here with some empathetic feelings.

Hebrews 5:2 He can have [describing a high priest] compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness.

In order to begin to see this you have to understand a little bit about what the book of Hebrews is about. It is the book of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. There is much in here about how Christ qualified to become High Priest. How did He qualify? He became a *man*. He did not become an ox. He did not become a lion. He did not become a dog. I use the term dog because dog is associated as being man's best friend, is it not? It is associated with having feelings toward man. It is associated with terms of compassion, being able to accept its owner without qualification.

When God became something other than what He was, He did not choose to be any of those. He chose to be a man, because man shares characteristics with God. He is in His image.

Let us continue to draw this out in chapter 2 of the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:14-18 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

When we see this figure applied to Christ, expect to see Him portrayed in terms of having human feelings, mostly in terms of characteristics that animals simply are not capable of. They may have types of them—how about empathy? Can a dog really feel with you? Or a cat, or a cow? Can they really share your feelings? But another human being can. In order to be High Priest, Jesus Christ had to become one with us.

So the man figure here represents feelings—empathy, sympathy, mercy, compassion—but it is seen in a certain narrow relationship (as we are going to see in a little bit), in a universal sense. We will explain this as we go on, a little bit further into the series. This will begin to make sense a little bit down the line here.

Let us leave the man and go on to the eagle. We are going to go to the book of Proverbs first.

Proverbs 30:17 The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.

I think that is as far as I will go there.

Job 39:26-30 "Does the hawk fly by your wisdom, and spread its wings toward the south? Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make its nest on high? It dwells on the rock and resides on the crag of the rock and the stronghold. From there it spies out the prey; its eyes observe from afar. Its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is."

A very interesting description.

Job 9:25-26 "Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They pass by like swift ships, like an eagle swooping on its prey."

Here again is another picture of something that is used in both a good and a bad sense. The picture here is one of soaring and majestic power, one that is able to climb into the very heavens—perhaps beyond the sight of men, maybe looking right into the dazzling sun and still not be blinded—and yet able to look at the earth with such piercing eyesight as to miss nothing.

Now applied to Christ, it is the one whose home is far beyond the dwelling place of men. Think of that in relation to an eagle. Their nest, called an aerie, is up on high. They soar, up into the sun, as it were, and swoop down to the earth. Even when they are up high they seem to be able to see things that are very tiny, by comparison, on the earth. What is being stressed here is Christ's divinity.

The order in which they appear seems to be according to John's arrangement in Revelation 4:6-8. The lion is the book of Matthew. That is where those characteristics are emphasized. The ox with Mark, where service to mankind is emphasized. The man with the book of Luke where there is much sympathy and empathy that He had in common with man in a universal sense. And then the eagle in John with Christ's divinity emphasized.

This does not mean that Matthew has nothing of service or sympathy or divinity. Each one of the books will have aspects of all four of them. Yet each one will dominate in one. It is sort of like looking at an object from

afar. If you look at a building from afar, you are able to see something that dominates, maybe the outline, the shape of the building. But the closer you get to the building, then things that formerly blended begin to become distinct and separate. When you do that, much of the confusion is then removed. And so it is with Christ.

Matthew 16:13-17 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

I want you to notice that people's judgment of Christ was greatly dependent upon their perspective—just like if you are looking at a building from afar. If you look at it from one angle, something of the outline of that building will dominate because of the angle you are looking at it. But you move maybe 90 degrees away and your perspective changes entirely, and so does the shape of the building change a great deal.

People who were "out in the world," who were not being worked with by God's Spirit—what was their perspective of Christ? Looking at it from their angle, they were saying He was John the Baptist, or He is Elijah, or He is Jeremiah. He is one of them. They were way off base. There was some relationship there, but they could not see enough of the details to enable them to positively identify who He was.

On the other hand, the disciples who were following Christ around, listening to His preaching first hand, being able to see Him with their own eyes up close when He explained His preaching to them, they had a different perspective. That perspective was given to them, Jesus said, by the calling of God, by the Holy Spirit.

They saw details that other people simply did not see. That is what we are doing here. We are going to lead you into details about Christ. God used

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to record essentially the same story, but each man looked at it from a little bit different perspective. Because he did, his perspective caused him to emphasize different things. They were all looking at the same thing—Christ. They were all hearing the same message—Christ's message. But each man did not remember or emphasize the same thing.

So what do we get? The benefit we get is a much more complete picture with far greater detail than if Christ had tried to inspire one man to do it all.

Galatians 4:21-28 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? [Do you not comprehend, do you not understand, do you not grasp it?] For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband." Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

What did Paul do here? Paul looked in the book of Genesis, at what on the surface appeared to be (maybe) at best just an interesting story. Hagar and Ishmael leaving the household of Abraham. But when Paul looked at it, his perspective gave something entirely different. From that, he was able to devise an allegory that is of great spiritual significance to you and me. His *perspective* enabled him to do that.

Let us look at another one as we continue to get the feel for this.

Psalms 19:1-4 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor

language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

David looked at God's creation and this is what the result was. He saw something, he grasped something, he comprehended something that is of spiritual significance. He not only saw a creation, but he saw a creation that *constantly, every day, day after day witnesses* to all of mankind that there is a **great and awesome Creator** of tremendous wisdom, awesome power of magnitude of mind and intelligence that is beyond comprehension. Was David's perspective different from other men's? Certainly it was.

So it becomes a point of instruction for you and me. God intended it that way. For some, Jesus is described in prophecy as being a root out of dry ground. Have you ever seen a root that is dried out, pulled out, yanked out? There is no life there. It is something to be thrown on the refuse heap. That is some people's perspective of Christ. But to you and me, He is altogether lovely. It is because of our perspective. It is the way we look at Him.

Each author—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—saw Christ with their own measure of understanding, with their view point. Thus Matthew—do you know anything about Matthew? What was he? He was a publican. He was a tax collector. He was an official of the vast Roman Empire. And so, he saw Christ through governmental eyes.

I know that this is true, because I see Christ from my perspective. I know that my word pictures and my thoughts about Him mostly tend to begin as a blue collar worker. That is where I get a lot of my analogies, a lot of my perspectives of Him. Then as I went through life, I can see other things that I see in Him that come from other areas. Now what is likely to dominate is I see Him as a minister, a pastor.

That is what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did. Some of their personality, some of their background, comes through here. We are going to see this come really clear in just a bit,(maybe things that you never saw in the book of Matthew about his perspective of things.

Now Mark, do you know anything about him? The Bible tells us what he did. It tells us what his ministry was. He served the apostles. It is very likely

that Peter is the actual author of the book of Mark. But it is named after Mark. Mark wrote it, probably from Peter's dictation. Mark was there serving as an aid (an aide de camp or whatever you might call it), a scribe for Peter.

Not only that, you might recall a little bit later in Paul's writings, in one of his letters—I believe it was to Timothy or Titus—he said, "Send Mark to me for he is valuable to me." Mark was the servant. The book of Mark very largely dwells upon service. You will see this as we go along.

What about Luke? Do we know anything about his background? Well, we know that he was the beloved physician. But there is really something else that dominates the book of Luke. Luke was a Gentile. The book of Luke looks at Christ, not as the Israelite's Messiah; he looks at Christ in a universal sense as the Son of Man—not the Messiah just to Israel, but the Messiah to the whole world. He sees Christ in terms of empathy, sympathy, and compassion in a universal sense—all those related feelings with mankind.

Now what about John? Do you know anything about John that the Bible reveals about him? John was Jesus' flesh-and-blood cousin. John views Him in a family way. However, it is very likely that John grew up with Jesus. They were cousins. And what did he see in that life? You *know* that Christ was different from any other kid. I mean as a kid, He was different from any kid you ever saw. He never sinned. So John writes about Christ as being otherworldly. Yes, He was a man. John saw His divinity even from childhood. He probably did not relate to it as a child, but later on, his perspective began to change when God began to convert him. So John the relative sees Christ as the Son in the Father's bosom. He was not of this world.

Consider the order once again, from Matthew to John. I believe that God arranged that as well. As we move from Matthew to John, the revelation increases in depth and it changes in form as well.

Do you remember Ezekiel's river, at the end of the book of Ezekiel in the 47th chapter? If you remember the story there, the river just keeps getting deeper and deeper.

Ezekiel 47:1 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.

Ezekiel 47:3-5 And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.

The first view that we get in the gospels, Christ is the Son of David as King of a kingdom. He commands: "I say unto you." He invites the weary and utters woes. But second, in the book of Mark, He is a King, yes, but He is a King that serves. You add the book of Luke to this—yes, He is the Son of David, He is a King who serves, but He is also a Man who is under restraint—the common restraints of a man. He has sympathy. He has empathy. He has compassion. He has anger. He loses sleep. He gets weary. He bleeds, or I should say, He perspires blood from His concern. Then we add the fourth—yes, He is a man, but He is the Man from heaven, Emmanuel, God with us.

What is the use of all of this? It is not just a gimmick. It is in God's Word. It is there for us to dig out. It is a teaching aid. It is an aid to understanding. It is an aid that if we meditate on these things, understand, and apply them, then we will not see Jesus as a flat, cold, uncaring, featureless piece of plastic that we just shove over into the corner and picture as just mechanically walking through life. We will see Him as a vibrant, warm, intensely concerned, powerful, multi-faceted man, High Priest, and God. The purpose of all this is for us to see in finer detail the **image** that we are being made into—transformed into the image of what we are to become.

I want you to meditate on that. We are being transformed from the glory of an unconverted human being into the glory of God. You know what John said, "We beheld His glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father." It took four biographies for God just to cram the essence of what He is so that we would have a better grasp of the image and try, as we might, to move our lives in that direction—to emulate, to imitate, to become what He is.

I Corinthians 15:47-49 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Ephesians 4:13-15 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, 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 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.

Are you beginning to see why it is so important that we have as many details as possible of the image into which we are being formed since this is a cooperative venture that God is involved with—you and me? We have to have some idea into what we are being made or we cannot use our free moral agency to go in that direction. We would not have the foggiest idea.

I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Satan is not taking this lying down. He tries to block the vision and make it as muddled as he possibly can. We see this in II Corinthians 3.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. . . .

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? You see *your own reflection!* What is Paul indicating here? When we look into God's spiritual mirror, we ought to see a reflection of Christ there. Do we know what that image is? It is not the image of what He looks like. It is the image of what He is!

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II Corinthians 4:4 . . . whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Satan tries as hard as he can to block the image of Christ, to make it as fuzzy and as vague as he possibly can. The more indistinct it is, the less likely we are going to be conformed to it. The more we know, the better off we are. **The greater grasp there is, the more we can lay hold on!**

Remember that verse from the last sermon? That is what God wants us to do—to *lay hold on, to apprehend* the image of Christ.

I John 4:17-18 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. [Think about that. When people look at you, do they see Christ?] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

All of us fear to some degree. We are not made perfect yet. But I want to go back to verse 17 and I want to concentrate on "love has been perfected." I am going to quote something to you from *Wuest Commentary*, Volume 2, page 169. He is going to be expounding upon this phrase, "is made perfect."

He starts by saying it is written in the perfect tense and it could be translated "has been made perfect." Or, an alternate translation for the word perfect is "has been made complete or mature." Now what it means is that whatever it is that he is talking about exists in its finished state.

Now again quoting present reality. "It represents a past fact, as been perfected and therefore is a present reality." It exists now, whatever it is he is talking about. What is he talking about? He is talking about love. God is love, therefore Christ is love. Christ is God. God is love. He therefore is writing this as though we also are love. Unfortunately, we are not completely grown up there yet. But that love has been perfected in us.

Quoting again, "Our love is literally the love with us." Now here is where I think it gets interesting. "This is not primarily God's love for us or our love for Him, but the love which God is, in His nature, produced in us by His holy spirit." Remember Paul said in Romans 5:5, "The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit."

I have told you this in the past and I will tell it again. *We can* operate according to the love of God! *He has already given it to us!* There is sufficient there to do whatever God requires. He is not stingy with His Holy Spirit! The problem is we have not grown yet to the place where we can use it in the same way that Christ could use it and the same way Christ could reflect what God is to mankind. But we are growing to that point, but that love *is there!* This is what I want to get across to you. That love is there, ready to be used.

The fullness of love results in a life devoted entirely to the Lord Jesus [I am still quoting here]. The word speaks of unreservedness of speech [no fear, boldness], a free and fearless confidence with nothing to hide or be ashamed of. In that kind of life the saint has nothing of which to be ashamed at the judgment of his works. That kind of life is a Christ-like life and that makes the saint, as he dwells in the midst of a world of sinful people, like Christ. And the Lord will not, at the judgment seat, condemn those, who while they lived on earth, were like Him.

It would be the same as condemning Himself.

What we have to do is make use of what we know of Christ. That is why we are going into this in a great deal of detail, so we can see some of the finer details, things that are frequently overlooked. We do not always overlook them, but sometimes we do.

We need to know more. The more we comprehend, the more we can apprehend. The more we comprehend, the more we are going to be able to lay hold on. The more we lay hold on, the more we are going to reflect the image of the glory of God.

Matthew shows Christ in connection with a certain kingdom. The kingdom, as he calls it, of heaven. In Matthew, He is not so much a servant. He is not so much a son of Adam or the Son of God, but He is the Son of Abraham through David, and heir of that Kingdom. This is special teaching that we need because of our position as what? What are we? We are Abraham's seed and we are heirs to the promise. We are members of a kingdom because Jesus told us that we would be a part of that. We want to be able, as it says in John that, "He that abides in Him ought to walk even as He walked."

I am going to end this sermon today right here, and next week we will pick this up and we will begin right in Matthew 1. I am going to give you an assignment. I would like you to read the book of Matthew between now and next Sabbath. Maybe it would be a good study for you to notice how many times Matthew mentions kingdom. That is what we will be dwelling on next week.