

THE POWER OF CHRIST

SERMONS BY TEXAS BAPTIST PASTORS

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SERMON FOUR

THE ADEQUACY OF CHRIST

By

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“For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:19).

When we survey the world situation of today, a state of unspeakable chaos comes into view. The peoples of the earth reveal a restlessness like that of the sea with the ebb and flow of its tide, or even when it is overhung by frowning clouds and lashed to fury in a storm. In their desperate futile efforts to make landing, they have run their ship aground and are seeking landing, some on planks, and some on other things. But above the clamor and vague gropings of all this confusion there appears the calm, confident face of the Son of God, with that poise born of conscious mastery and adequate power to meet the need. Yea, even though the darkness be like that of the fourth watch of the night, He comes walking on the distressed sea with its contrary winds to speak the reassuring words, **“Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”**

Let us be assured. We have an adequate Christ. We are not left to vague gropings, our Eternal Pilot with nail prints in His hands is at the helm. Jesus is not behind time; He is ahead of time.

- We join with Renan: “Whatever the surprises of history, Jesus will never be surpassed.”
- Also with Jean Paul Richter: “Christ, being the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, has lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of the centuries out of its channel, and still governs the future.”
- Yea, we take our stand by the side of the emperor Julian when he exclaimed: “O Galilean, thou hast conquered.”

But we are to consider some of the enduring marks of His adequacy.

I. There Is the Adequacy of Priority

The Scriptures are most emphatic: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God”** (John 1:1-2).

“Of course, there never was a ‘beginning’ with God or with Logos, but we use the term for all that portion of eternity previous to man’s career.”

The phrase **“With God”** means **“face to face”** and suggests the most intimate fellowship of equals.

We quote once more from John, the words of Jesus in the prayer of intercession: **“O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”** (John 17:5). Now turn to Paul: **“Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”** (Philippians 2:6). Again, **“He is before all things, and by Him all things consist”** (Colossians II 17). The author of Hebrews declares for priority also: **“By Whom He made the worlds”** (Hebrews 1:2). More detailed still: **“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him”** (Colossians 1:16).

Jesus was no afterthought of God; He was equal with God, living in personal conscious life before time began. Neither was He accidental or incidental in the divine scheme. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe.

II. The Adequacy of Divine Fulness

In Jesus the Eternal broke through into time.

- **“For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell”** (Colossians 1:19).
- **“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”** (Colossians 2:9).
- **“And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace”** (John 1:16).

It is thus that He brought the supreme revelation of God.

- **“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”** (John 1:18).
- **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14).

This is in accord with His own answer to the challenge of Philip, **“Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us”** (John 14:8).

Jesus answered him, **“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”** (John 14:9). Indeed, **“He is the Brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person”** (Hebrews 1:3).

So if I would see God, I must look at Jesus.

“God hath packed into the personality of Jesus all the glories of the deity and of humanity. Like a ship filled to capacity with its cargo, a walled city of the olden time with its soldiers, Jesus is packed with God. Never did He empty Himself of His divine nature or His attributes.” *

* Dr. L. R. Scarborough in “*With Christ After the Lost*,” page 54, The Broadman Press

“He emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of Majesty,” * but not of its essence.

* From Lightfoot. Cited by A. T. Robertson in “*Word Pictures in the New Testament*”, page 444.

Plato voiced the age-long cry of the human heart: “We look for a god or a god-inspired man to show us the light and take the darkness from our eyes.” Jesus is the answer. Not simply a god-inspired man, but the God-Man.

- **“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** (Colossians 2: 3).

- **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life”** (I John 1:1).

“Till God in human form I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,
The holy, just, and sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel’s face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins.
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace forgives my sins.” *

* Quoted in “*The Christ I Know*,” by T. J. Villers.

III. The Adequacy of a Timeless and Boundless Appeal

Consider this in the light of the radical differences between the successive generations of men. What surprising changes have occurred. Yet Jesus outspans all the changes.

The “acids of modernity” may have erased some boundaries and encroached upon forbidden areas destructively, but they have not reduced Jesus. At this very hour it is “Christ or chaos.”

If we face the tragic breakdown in character so evident in current life, we are forced to look to Jesus as the one ideal. His challenge, **“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”** has never been successfully contradicted. On the character of Jesus there is no blemish: **“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not”** (I Peter 2:22-23).

It is His character embodied in the hearts of men which is the supreme need. Turn to the racial animosities emerging on every hand today, the growing nationalism which seeks to live for itself and exclude all others. Christ alone can make the world into a brotherhood, **“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”** (Matthew 12:50). **“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all”** (Colossians 3:11).

Contemplate the growing tendency toward the totalitarian state with its most dangerous feature, the domination of the church. Are we to turn back the pages of history and commit this unspeakable adultery? Not if we heed Jesus: **“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s”** (Matthew 22: 21).

As the clouds of war become more ominous and streams of blood flow on fierce battle fronts, we recall the appropriate warning of Jesus spoken nineteen hundred years ago: **“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”** (Matthew 26:52).

Envision the armies of young people all over the world who are marching, restlessly marching. Marching, as we may readily see, “at the call of personalities rather than program,” * and also “behind the call of the trumpets of a hard patriotism” (ibid, 8).

It is reported that on a great banner of a Hitler youth encampment last summer the following words appeared: “The highest duty of German youth is to die for the Fatherland” (ibid, 8).

On being asked the reason for their marching some Chinese youth responded: “We must wake up China. China needs martyrs. We are candidates for the position” (Ibid, 10).

It is ours to tell them that Jesus, not Hitler, not Mussolini, not Stalin, is the One under whose banner we must march if we are to know the sweets of victory.

* Daniel A. Poling in **“Youth Marches,”** page 7. The Judson Press.

This is distinctly His appeal. Oh, that we would heed it.

IV. There Is the Adequacy of a Unique Redemption

- **“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”** (I Timothy 2: 5-6).

- **“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12).

- **“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”** (I Peter 5:18).

Therefore salvation is not in an institution, ritual, ordinance, or ceremonial, but in a Person.

It is not in a sacrament regarded as a vehicle of grace, but in a sacrifice, that of the spotless Lamb of God **“slain from the foundation of the world.”**

- Salvation is not in a rosary, but in the Rose of Sharon, which was bruised and broken before it could give forth its redeeming fragrance to a world under the stench of sin.
- Neither is salvation in penance, it is in **“repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20:21).

A dying doctor, according to a story given by E. Stanley Jones, was about to go into eternity without salvation. The physician who attended him was a Christian. This Christian doctor sought earnestly to show his dying doctor friend the way. At first his brow was knit in foreboding perplexity. Presently, under the clarifying testimony of this Christian friend, the light broke into the face of the dying man. In an exclamation of understanding, saving experience, he said, “All my life I have been troubled about what to believe, and now I see it is Whom to trust.” *

“The Christ of the Indian Road,” page 172.

Life lifted life.

- If baptism saves, then baptism is the Saviour, not Jesus.
- If the church saves, then the church is the Saviour, not Jesus.
- If good works save, then each good deed is a Saviour, not Jesus.

If Noah had been imbued with the conception some have today of salvation, he would have worshiped the ark after the flood instead of building an altar to the God of the ark. Let us remember that this redemption came by blood. Other mediators entered in by the blood of bulls and goats; Jesus **“by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”** (Hebrews 9:12).

See Him there on the tree, thorns piercing His brow, nails through His hands, a spike through His feet. These wounds are “not poor dumb mouths.”

Oh, that I could put a tongue in every wound of Jesus that would impel every sinner to rise and go to the Father by the way of the cross. But I cannot, I need not; God has put these tongues there already. They are vocal with one message: “Sinner, God loves you.”

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

No, nowhere else. It is on Calvary only where, **“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”** (Psalm 85:10).

V. The Adequacy of a Victorious Resurrection

“Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

Recall the time when Aaron’s priesthood was questioned in the rebellion of Korah. God directed Moses to lay up a rod for each tribe before the testimony with the assurance that the rod chosen by him would blossom with life.

It was done, each tribe presenting a perfectly dead rod. **“And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds”** (Numbers 17:8).

I know of another morrow on whose radiant morning a priesthood was forever established, not by the budding of an inanimate rod, but by the resurrection from the dead of the High Priest Himself, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Bright and Morning Star, whose name is above every name, even Jesus. He had Himself predicted it, **“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”** (Matthew 16:21). **“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”** (John 12:24).

Simon Peter also gave convincing evidence: Quoting the words of David, **“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.”** He makes bold to show that these words do not apply to David himself because **“he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.”**

What then is their application? **“Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption”** (Acts 2:30-31).

“We have no sepulchre,” to quote the words of E. Stanley Jones, “because we have no corpse.”

The sepulchres of all other founders of religions are **“with us unto this day.”** This is the crowning, differentiating miracle; the miracle which gives authentication to all His miracles. No other historic person in the world has ever risen shortly after his death and burial to continue his influence by the power of an endless life except Jesus.

There were some resuscitations, but only one resurrection. Christ alone is the **“firstborn from the dead.”**

- Angels heralded the news, saying, **“He is not here; He is risen.”**
- Eyewitnesses identified Him during the eventful forty days in which He lived among them in His glorified body.

- Paul stated earth's darkest assumption, **"if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain,"** but he was quick to show that it was wholly groundless when he declared, **"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"** (I Corinthians 15:20).

It is by this unparalleled conquest of death that Christ turned the light on **"life and immortality."** **"Because I live, ye shall live also"** (John 14:19). Our heaven is an "opened heaven" from whose portals come angels **"ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"** (John 1: 51). He is the ladder of communication; He is God's way to man, man's way to God. **"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus"** (Hebrews 6:19-20).

VI. We Have in Him Adequate Lordship

- **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"** (Acts 2: 36).
- **"For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord"** (II Corinthians 4:5).
- With us there are not **"lords many."**
- **"For one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"** (Matthew 23: 8).

This leads us to again affirm the priesthood of the believer.

Each one of us in the democracy of the redeemed can approach God for himself directly without the intervention or contravention of any human mediators. The way is open through the blood of Jesus. The veil of the temple has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace"** (Hebrews 4:16).

Recall also the competency of the soul before God. No coercion by priest or potentate, all free to worship God or not to worship Him. In matters spiritual we acknowledge one supreme allegiance, to Jesus, our risen, reigning Lord. Thinking further of this Lordship, we are led to consider **"the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood"** (Acts 20: 28).

He is its head; it is His mystical body. Are we to be led astray by puerile appeals calculated to disparage it or relegate it to some junk heap of outworn things? God forbid. Hear Jesus: **"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matthew 16:18).

Let its doctrines, its ordinances, its program, all be precious to us, because Christ our Lord approves and commands them. It is ever a puzzle to me to understand the consistency of the fellow who proudly announces his loyalty to the words of Jesus, **"Love your neighbor as yourself,"** and in the next breath refuses to obey Him in baptism. The same adequate Lord endorses and commands both. Then let us heed them both, and all others beside, because the One Preeminent Lord has spoken.

Again, we find ourselves looking out upon the fields so white unto the harvest.

It is not for us to dawdle and quibble about this mighty business of world conquest; our Lord has spoken: **“And said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, And ye are witnesses of these things”** (Luke 24:46-48).

Before He spoke the above words, **“He showed them His hands and His feet”** (Luke 24:40). These were the marks of His identity. Hear Him give His shout of triumph, **“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death”** (Revelation 1:18).

Come, let us follow on in His train.

“All hail the power of Jesus; name.
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All”

Dr. Eldred Douglas Head was born at Sparta, La., Nov. 15, 1892. Education, Baylor U., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (A.B., A.M., Th.M. and Th.D.). Ordained, May, 1914. Pastor, rural churches, 1913-15; Valley Mills, Tex., 1916-23; Whitney, Tex., 1925-31; Associate Professor of Bible in Baylor U., 1920-32; First Baptist Church, Houston, Tex., Sept. 15, 1932 to date. Preacher, Texas Baptist Convention sermon, 1937.

First Baptist Church, Houston, has 3,848 members. Since Sept. 15, 1932, under Dr. Head's ministry, there have been 1,906 additions. Total contributions have been \$210,049. Their record S. S. attendance has been 1,423. Total value of all their church property is \$1,000,000 (All statistics as of Dec. 15, 1937).

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