

Place: Lurgan Baptist 27:4:2003

Reading: John 20:1-23

4. THE UNLIMITED CHRIST

Several years ago the Christian Beacon magazine released a list describing the perfect pastor. A few of his unlimited abilities were,

- * He preaches exactly 20 minutes, and then sits down. He condemns sin, but never hurts anyone's feelings.
- * He works from 8am to 10pm in every sort of work, from preaching responsibilities to custodial service.
- * He is 26 years old and has been preaching for 30 years.
- * He is tall and short, thin, heavysset and handsome, with one brown eye, and one blue eye.
- * His hair is parted down the middle, the left side dark and straight, the right side brown and wavy.
- * He loves to work with teenagers, and spends all his time with the elderly.
- * He makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelising the unsaved, and is never out of the study.

Now why are we smiling ? Because we all know that such a performance is not only improbable, but totally impossible. At his best, man still has many limitations, doesn't he ? Only the Lord Jesus Christ is unlimited. For example here, in His resurrection body, He was able to enter the room without opening the doors ! It

was a solid body, for He asked the disciples to touch Him, and He even ate some fish. (Lk 24:41-43) But it was a different kind of body, one that was not limited by what we call the "*laws of nature.*" You see, here is brought before us, "*The Unlimited Christ.*" Look at (20:19) and notice the three words that I want to leave with you this ! "*THEN ... CAME JESUS !*" Do you get the force of these words ? A company of His disciples were gathered together in the Upper Room. They were fearful and downcast for had they not seen their beloved Lord and Master die a cruel death on the cross ? Many of them in their heart of hearts thought He was still dead.

It is true that there had been some mention of His having been seen by one and another of His disciples, but even so they were filled with doubt and fear and were like men that dream. It was all so strange and mysterious. That the Saviour had died, they had no doubts at all. He had been cruelly crucified between two thieves, and then His precious body had been taken down from the cross and laid in a new garden tomb. Yes, there was no doubt about His death, and yet some of the disciples had said they had seen Him alive. Mary Magdalene out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils had been the very first to go to the tomb very early that morning. And as she stood without the sepulchre weeping, suddenly the Lord Himself appeared, spoke to her by name and then, just as suddenly disappeared. *How mysterious it all was !* Some of the other women also returning from the tomb had a similar experience. (Matt 28:9-0) Then some time later that day, Peter had

seen the Lord. (Lk 24:34 1 Cor 15:15) and later still the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had met with the Risen Lord and actually had a meal with Him. How confusing it all was ! Had they really seen Him, and if so where was He now ? It was in this strange, troubled bewildered, frame of mind that they met in the Upper Room, at least ten of them were there and probably others, (Lk 24:33) and the doors were firmly shut and locked.

Suddenly, without any announcement, and without the doors being opened, “ Then came Jesus.” He really was alive, for here standing in the midst was their own beloved Lord. He had risen from the dead. He was alive the Risen Lord had come ! Now these three words,

“ *Then came Jesus,*” draw forth 3 questions, *When ? How ? Why ? “ Then came Jesus,*”

(1) THE MOMENT OF HIS COMING

“ *Then came Jesus,*” But when did He come ? He came:

(a) WHEN SIN HAD BEEN EXPIATED:

Now when we speak of expiation what do we mean ? Simply the removal of guilt by means of an atonement or satisfaction rendered to God. Now “ *expiation and propitiation are relative terms, the sinner or is guilt is expiated, God or justice is propitiated.*” (Hodge) Did our Lord not come into the world for this purpose ? That He might atone for the sins of the lost, that He

might pay the penalty for sin. Do you recall the message of the angel ? “ *Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.*” (Matt 1:21) My the work of atonement could only be accomplished by the way of the cross for “ *without the shedding of blood there is no remission.*” (Heb 9:22) That’s why the Lord Jesus said to His disciples here, “ *it behoved Christ to suffer.*” (Lk 24:46) And so the time came at the end of our Lord’s three years of public ministry, when “ *He Who knew no sin was made sin for us,*” and “ *He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.*”

(2 Cor 5:21 1 Pet 2:24)

“ *Then came Jesus,*” for the Christian faith is a resurrection faith. Indeed the resurrection was the guarantee that the work of redemption was now completed, the seal of the Father’s approval on His Son’s atoning work on the cross. (Rom 4:25) (a)

(b) WHEN DEATH HAD BEEN CONQUERED:
You see, “ *Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death.*” (Heb 2:14) Christ, says, Paul “ *abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*” (2 Tim 1:9) Christ pulled the sting out of death. My Jesus took the gloom out of the grave. Christ has taken the dread of dying. The Saviour met the substance, now you and I only have to pass through the shadow. Now “ *a shadow,*” may frighten you but it will never hurt you. That great preacher Dr. Donald Barnhouse lost his wife when she was only in her thirties. She left with three children ages twelve and under. Dr. Barnhouse chose to bury his

wife and conduct the service himself. While he was driving to the memorial service with his three grieving, broken-hearted children staring blankly out the window, a truck passed them on the highway, and cast a shadow over their car. Dr. Barnhouse never losing his brilliant ability to illustrate, paused and thought, “ *what does a father tell his motherless children at a time like this ?*”

Then he looked at his twelve year old daughter and said,

“ *Sweetheart, tell me would you rather be run over by that truck or by its shadow ?*” Startled by the question, she said, “ *Oh, I don’t know, Daddy, the shadow I guess.*” “ *Why ?*” he asked. “ *Because the shadow can’t hurt you.*” He then said, “ *It was only the shadow that hit Mummy. The truck hit Jesus 2000 years ago at Calvary.*” A tremendous lesson was it not ? My Christ has take the sting out of death, the gloom out of the grave, the dread out of dying. He has become our Victor. “ *Then came Jesus.*” When ? (a) (b)

(c) SATAN HAD BEEN DEFEATED:

Do you recall speaking of His death the Lord Jesus said,

“ *Now is the judgement of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*” (12:21) Although the cross might have appeared to signal Satan’s victory over God, in reality it marked Satan’s defeat. (Rom 16:20 Heb 2:14) Paul speaking of the cross, says “ *having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*” (Col

2:15) The picture is that of a victorious Roman general parading his defeated enemies through the streets of Rome to the delight of the crowds. My Christ won the victory over the demons forces at the cross, where their efforts to halt God’s redemptive plan were ultimately defeated. Do you need to fear the Devil ? No ! For the Devil is a vanquished foe, he was defeated by Christ at the cross and we believers have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. (Col 1:13) Satan, then should be treated as a defeated enemy for we are not fighting **for** victory, bless God we are fighting **from** victory, for in Christ we are more than conquerors. (1)

(2) THE MANNER OF HIS COMING

“ *Then came Jesus.*” How did our Lord come into that locked room ? Well,

(a) HE CAME BODILY:

In bodily form. There is not the slightest doubt about this. He did not come as a ghost or as a disembodied spirit. There He was the Lord, “ *the Man Christ Jesus,*” in bodily form. Imagine it. Just a few days before they had walked with Him and eaten with him and slept beside Him and talked with Him. Then came the horrendous betrayal in the darkness of Gethsemane that turning point after which nothing was ever the same again. Death the most horrible form of death came between them and their beloved Master. All they had hoped for and planned were lost. Their dreams

were dashed, leaving them frightened and filled with doubt, until In a flash, as though time and space have been suspended, He has come back, bringing all sorts of new dimensions to their attention, as the power of God is unleashed in His new body. *It was unbelievable !*

My this was a bodily resurrection. I mean they saw Him, handled Him, ate with Him, spoke with Him.

Where they all mistaken ? (Matt 28:9 Lk 24:30,39) Of course not, there He was in bodily form, their own beloved Lord. Now of course, there are those who deny the resurrection. *But we believe that the precious body of the Lord Jesus which was reverently laid in the cool grave on the evening of Friday April the 3rd literally vacated that grave before six o'clock on the following Sunday morning the 5th April. For us it is all as literal and factual as that. This nothing less and nothing else is what we mean by the resurrection of Christ.* “ He arose, He arose, Hallelujah Christ arose.” And do you recall what Paul says ? “ *We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change out vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.*” (Phil 3:21) Amazing ! His glorious body. My there will be no more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more dim eyes. No more sickness, sorrow, or pain. “ *We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.*”

(b) HE CAME MYSTERIOUSLY:

Yes, there was mystery about His appearance. How could they understand it and how can we ? Think for a

moment, the doors were closed, and suddenly, “ *then came Jesus.*” What is a Christian ? A Christian is Christ in a person. “ *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” (Col 1:27) We become Christians when we receive the Lord Jesus into our hearts ! But you say, how can one do this, it is so mysterious, so difficult to understand. Do you ever think of what your great grandfather would think if he was come to back, and sit in front of a television and you explained to him that by pressing a remote in your hand he could see and hear things that were happening thousands of miles away ? He would say, “ *I cannot believe it, I cannot understand it, its so mysterious.*” Oh, he may not be able to understand it, but he could feel it, hear it, see it, and know that it was true. So it is when we receive Christ as our Saviour. He comes to abide within us for ever, though the mystery of the indwelling Christ is a mystery indeed. (a) (b)

(c) HE CAME AUTHORITATIVELY:

“ *Then came Jesus and stood in the midst.*” My was that not His rightful place ? Is this not where He belongs in the centre of things ? Do you recall that as a boy He was in the midst of *the curious rabbis* of Jerusalem ? (Lk 2:46) Then on the cross He was in the midst of *the crucified robbers* at Calvary ? (Jn 19:18) John, caught up into heaven, saw the Lamb in the midst of *the crowned royalties* of heaven. (Rev 5:6) Today, however He is the midst of *the converted remnant* of earth. (Matt 18:20) “ *Jesus in the Midst.*” At the centre of things ! Tell me, is He in the midst of your home, and business ? Have you given Him central place in your heart ? “ *Then came Jesus.*” (1) (2)

(3) THE MESSAGE OF HIS COMING

Not only, why did He come ? How did He come ? But why did He come ? Well, look at the context. He came:

(a) **TO GIVE THEM HIS PEACE:**

Look at (20:19-20) You see, it is Christ alone who can give us peace with God, and it is Christ alone who can impart the peace of God to our souls. Notice:

1. The BASIS for this Peace:

Do you see it ? “ *His hands and His side,*” that is, He showed them the marks of His crucifixion, the marks of Calvary. It tells us that our peace is based on His pains, our salvation is based on His sacrifice, our eternal well being rests on His excruciating wounds. Do you ever people saying, “ *Well, he made his peace with God.*” No, he didn’t. The only who ever made peace was Christ. “ *Having made peace through the blood of His cross.*” (Col 1:20) Do you know anything about this peace with God ? Have you received this peace that Christ made through His cross ? (Rom 5:1) 1:

2. The BLESSING of this Peace:

Did you notice the Risen Redeemer said it again.

“ *Peace be unto you as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*” (20:21) Why did He say it the second time ? Was it because He knew that they were going into the world and they would meet with suffering, persecution, and disillusionment ? But in the midst of

the storm, they could know “ *the peace of God which passeth all understanding.*” (Phil 4:7) Do you remember when the decree went forth in Babylon that noone was to pray for a month ? Do you recall what Daniel did ? He prayed ! Do you recall the result of his prayer ? He slept like a baby with the lions in the den ? Peace in the midst of the storm. Do you possess it ? Or is your life filled with worry, fret, care ? My Christ is alive to give you His peace ! (a)

(b) **TO GIVE THEM HIS PROGRAMME:**

“ *As my Father so send I you.*” (20:21) The Christian faith is a missionary faith. As Christ Himself was sent by the Father to procure salvation, so now we are sent by the Son to proclaim salvation. My we are not to remain in hiding, sheltered from conflict behind these closed doors, withdrawn into ecclesiastical tranquillity. No, with Christ’s peace in our hearts and on our lips we are sent into the very world of which we were previously afraid. And our mission is to be modelled on Christ’s. Notice, he did not merely issue a Command, “ *the Father sent me, I send you.*” No, he also supplied a Pattern, “ *As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*” How did the Father send the Son ? He sent Him into the world. Why did the Father send the Son ? To deal with sin. (Heb 9:26) My we are to go into the world and proclaim with clarity and authority the terms on which God forgives sins and without which He retains them. This is our responsibility ! The question is this, how are we doing ? How are you doing ? Are you saying, “ *Well I’m so weak, and useless ?*” Did you notice, Christ also

came:

(c) TO GIVE THEM HIS POWER:

For in anticipation of the Day of Pentecost He said, “*receive ye the Holy Ghost.*” (20:22) A young man was an apprentice to a master artist who produced the most beautiful stained glass windows. The apprentice could not come even close to his masters work so one day he borrowed his masters tools, thinking this was the answer. After several weeks the young man said, “*I am not doing any better with your tools than I did with mine.*” The teacher replied, “*Son, its not the tools of the master you need, it’s the spirit of the master you need.*” Is your witness empowered by the Holy Spirit ?

“*Then came Jesus.*” (1) (2) (3) A little girl one day was examining her mothers features. She said, “*Mummy I do love you face, its so beautiful, and your eyes are so kind, but Mummy I don’t like your hands.*” Her hands were dreadfully scarred. That mother her little girl a story. It was the story of a fire, and of a little baby girl asleep upstairs, it told of how the mother rushed up that burning staircase, saved her child, but in the process her hands were terribly burnt. When the story was finished that mother said to her little girl, “*that baby girl was you, and that mother was I.*” The wee girl was silent for a moment and then she said, “*Mummy I do love you face and your eyes, but I love your hands best of all.*” “*Then came Jesus And He showed unto them His hands and His side.*” My those nailed scarred hands speak to us and they say,

***“ I gave my life for Thee
My precious blood I shed
That thou mightest ransomed be
And quickened from the dead
I gave, I gave my life for thee
What hast thou given for Me.”***