

The Center—Jesus

#0643

Study given by W.D. Frazee—October 17, 1958

Space history has been made. I suppose you are all acquainted with the fact that a man-made object has been sent out into space about one third of the way to the moon, attaining at one point the tremendous speed of 23,456 miles per hour. Its farthest point was 78,270 miles from the place in Florida where it was launched. That is a long way for a man-made object to travel. Nothing quite like it in the history of the world.

Next month they are going to try again. There was one little error, they say, that kept them from getting their rocket clear to the other side of the moon so they could take a picture of what the other side looks like, and send the picture back to this world. It is wonderful, isn't it?

Yet the thing that impresses me is how puny it all is. How very puny. The following text has lost none of its timeliness because of any headlines this last week:

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails” Isaiah 40:26.

Lift up your eyes higher than Sputnik. Higher than Pioneer. Higher than any of these man-made satellites or rockets.

I would like to have us think of the universe and the lessons it has to teach us in this day when more people are interested in the universe than at any time before. At the time Isaiah wrote these words many of the pagans who knew not God had some very interesting concepts of the universe.

Some years after Isaiah, the best astronomical knowledge of the ancient world was combined into the writings of a man by the name of Ptolemy, who wrote in Egypt. His views influenced astronomical thought for over fifteen hundred years. The idea was that everything was going around this world. The moon goes around the earth. Venus and Mercury goes around the earth. The sun goes around the earth. Mars and Jupiter and Saturn all go around the earth. And outside of that there is a great big sky with the jewels of the stars like diamond studs stuck there, all going around the earth.

For about two thousand years learned men, as well as the multitude, believed that. It has been called the geocentric plan. Geo means earth. Centric means, of course, the center. In other words, this earth is the center.

It is a very interesting concept. It is one that God did not give man. Man got it out of his own heart. The Devil put it there. He put the idea that this earth is the center of everything, and that everything visible in the universe is revolving around this world.

A few hundred years ago a Polish astronomer came forward with the view that the earth was not the center. The earth was turning about a central body, the sun. The planets, Venus, Mercury and Mars were revolving around the sun. That was called heliocentric. Helio meaning the sun, and centric the center.

You can see how vastly different the two ideas are. Yet the interesting thing is that when the idea came out millions didn't believe it. They said that all you have to do is look. It revolves around us. The sun comes up in the East and goes down in the West. The moon does that way. All the stars do that way. All you have to do is look. This Polish astronomer is crazy. Yet he was right, wasn't he?

The interesting thing is that as time goes on, and men have gotten telescopes that magnify greater and look further and further into space, they have discovered more things. They have discovered that not only does this earth and the planets revolve around the sun, but the sun itself is going at a tremendous speed, revolving along with all the other visible and invisible stars around a common center of gravity in our great galaxy, the Milky Way. Some astronomers have put that center in the star clouds of Sagittarius, one of the constellations you see in the summer in the South, located in the southern part of the Milky Way.

I do not understand all that. I can tell you about it, but I don't comprehend it. It is too big. The distances are too vast. But think of it. In a few hundred years man has expanded his views of the universe from the place where he used to think this little world was the center of it all, and all the rest went around like a toy to look at. Now the place where he sees this earth is just one little world that revolves around the sun. The sun revolves with millions of other suns around a great center in our galaxy, or island universe. But there is another concept way beyond that. You will find it on the next to the last page of the book *Great Controversy*:

“With undimmed vision they [the redeemed] gaze upon the glory of creation—suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity” *Great Controversy*, page 677.

Is this earth the center? Oh, no. Is our sun the center? Not of anything except this little planetary system. Are the star clouds with Sagittarius the center of our Milky Way? No.

The real center is at the throne of God. What a vast difference between a view which looks upon this little world as the center with all going around it like a toy and that great vision which sees the entire universe circling the throne of Deity.

All this teaches the great truth that He, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, our Creator, is the center. He is not merely at the center, He is the center.

Paul introduces our Lord Jesus as the One through whom the Father has spoken. Then he says concerning Him:

“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”
Hebrews 1:3.

He upholds all things. He upholds the earth and its moon. He upholds all the great galaxy and the sun in its position, whirling on its way eighteen miles a second. He upholds all the unnumbered universes beyond. They all circle the throne of Deity. He is upholding all things by the word of His power.

Men call the operation of that power which upholds all things gravity. They call the order by which it operates the law of gravitation. Newton discovered that. But that is merely giving a name to something. It doesn't explain it. The real explanation is in the Bible. Speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“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.

Visible things are the things we see, but He created the invisible things too. Electricity is invisible. The wind is invisible. Gravitation is invisible. He is the author of all these forces. Now watch:

“And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist”
Colossians 1:17.

Consist means hold together. That is what holds the universe together. That is what keeps it from blowing to pieces or falling apart. He is the center, and all things are held together by Him.

Is He your center? Is He the center of your life? If that isn't true, then you are not in orbit.

Christ is not the center of people who are not in orbit. They are trying to make a track of their own. They are trying in every way to get away from that gravitational pull of the great center of the universe.

Lucifer has been trying it for six thousand years. Although he was the Day Star, and although he makes a brilliant splash across the heavens, like any meteor he is going out, and there will be nothing left.

Are you in orbit? Is Christ the center of your life? I read a beautiful statement. I have read it many times, but somehow as I have been meditating on these things this last week the statement took on new meaning. It is wonderful as

you gather different Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy references through the years and store them away in the mind, all of a sudden something will happen and they begin to arrange themselves into a new pattern. Talking about the youth:

“Lead them to behold the One ‘altogether lovely.’ When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. The enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardor of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure” *Education*, page 297.

Oh, thank the Lord. We are looking at people who have a center, at people who have an orbit. That word fixed doesn't mean repair. We use it that way sometimes, but that is not what it means. What does it mean? Stayed on. Fastened so it cannot get loose.

Have you found your center? Oh, then you have some stability. You can go along like a star at a speed that is tremendous, and yet there is nothing dangerous about it, because you are held in orbit by the gravitational center whose claims you acknowledge, and whose magnetic pull you have accepted without any rebellious thoughts. Oh, to say yes to Jesus Christ. Oh, to let Him pull us. Oh, to let Him lead us.

Tell me, is duty a delight to you, or is it a great burden? Is sacrifice a pleasure, or is it something you would do most anything to get away from. It all depends on whether you are in orbit or not.

Are you in orbit? Do you have a center? This is the great law of life for the universe. Not geo-centered, everything centering here where I am. Not ego-centered, self-centered. Oh, no. But Christ-centered.

When our lives are centered in Christ, then we have a cheerful and joyous and blessed influence on all those around us. We reflect the light of His love, because Jesus is love. God is love. He says, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” If we have responded to that magnetic attraction, if we have responded to that drawing, then as we behold love, love is awakened in our hearts.

He says, If you love Me, feed my sheep. If you love Me, love others. If you want to serve Me, serve others. If you want to do something for Me, do something for others. If you want to live for Me, live for others.

Ah, but Lord, there is so much I would like to do for myself.
Never mind, that is not the way to be happy.

This self-centered thing is so small, so puny, so narrow, so restricted. Think of it. A tiny little world of my own with everything revolving around me. It is a great toy for a baby.

Paul said that when he was a child he spoke and thought and understood as child. When he became a man he put away childish things. There are some childish things people ought to put away while they are still children.

This is one of them. A little baby reaches for the moon and cries because its mother will not give it the moon. Its world is so tiny it thinks the moon is right out there to grab, if somebody would only pick it up and give it to him. What a colossal catastrophe would take place if the moon would respond to the baby's pull.

There are a lot of things people think they want that are just like that. I want to read you something about children. This is one of the references that clicked in my mind as I was thinking about this matter of a center. What are we revolving around? Listen:

“Children of two to four years of age should not be encouraged to think that they must have everything that they ask for. Parents should teach them lessons of self-denial and never treat them in such a way as to make them think they are the center, and that everything revolves about them” *Child Guidance*, page 132.

Notice these are not older people, mature people, people you can reason with. These are little children two to four years of age.

I didn't make that up. It was written before you were born. But isn't it wonderful? Right on the point? Little children should not be encouraged to think they are the center and that everything revolves about them.

Did you ever drop into a home and see everything revolving around a two or three or four year old? Believe me, everything can be in orbit around that youngster. Father and mother, older brother and sister, grandpa and grandma, aunts and uncles, all revolving around the child. And the interesting thing is that the more planets it has in orbit about it, the less happy it is. The less satisfied.

We think the little darling must have what it wants. It doesn't want this, it wants that. It doesn't like this, it likes that. Did you ever see one of those egocentric youngsters given something it was crying for, and then throw it down on the ground and start yelling for something else?

What is the matter? It is violating the law of the universe. God never made the child to be the center of the universe. No. It is a precious little child, but it is not the center. It is out of place. And it gets everything and everybody else out of place that consents to enter into a program of that kind.

We say we love them so much. That isn't love. That is selfishness. If you love them, the greatest service you can do for them is to get them into gear with God and the universe. And all you need to do to learn that lesson is to look about you and see a world, most of which in this generation is made up of people who never got this lesson when they were two and three and four years old. Now they are walking around sixteen or twenty or forty or sixty years old, and they still think that

everything and everybody ought to be revolving around them. And every now and then they point out how somebody is out of step.

Why are they out of step? Because they are stepping on my toes. That shows they are out of step. They are not doing what I want. They are not serving me. They are not pleasing me. They are wrong.

I say, society is full of people like that today. Oh friends, all the medicine in the world cannot cure it. All the diet in the world cannot cure it. And I add to that, all the hydrotherapy in the world cannot cure it. And even charcoal will not cure it.

We are dealing with something basic here. When one's gaze is fixed upon Jesus, the life finds its center. Where is your center, my friends? Where? Is it in yourself, or is it in Jesus Christ? And believe me, you cannot look both ways at once. No, you cannot.

I am going to read a Bible text which describes those people who are not in orbit:

“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear...” Jude 11-12.

They are egocentric. They are self-centered. They come to a feast of love, but who do they feed? Themselves. Now watch:

“...clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” Jude 12-13.

They are not in orbit. No. They are out of place to their own misery and the misery of others. Why? Because they are feeding themselves. They are thinking about themselves. They are contending for themselves. Now I will read it as it is put in the Twentieth Century translation:

“Alas for them. They walked in the steps of Cain. Led astray by Balaam's love of gain they plunged into sin, and they came to their ruin through a rebellious spirit like Cores. These are the people who are blocks upon your love-feasts when they join you at your gatherings and provide only for themselves without scruple. They are clouds without water, driven before the winds. They are trees that are leafless, destitute of fruit, dead through and through, torn up by the roots. They are wild sea waves foaming with their own shame. They are wandering stars for which the blackest darkness is reserved forever.

These men are always grumbling and complaining. They follow where their passions lead them. They have arrogant words upon their lips, and they pay court to people only for what they can get from them.”

What a picture of the world. Plenty of people are glad to pay out money to take a course in how to win friends and influence people. What for? So they can get their own way. Yes sir. Egocentric. All centered in self. It will never succeed. It will never pay. They are not in orbit. They are wandering stars to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.

Where did it start? With ninety-nine out of a hundred it started in the cradle and the toddling stage, with sentimental parents catering to their every whim, and responding to their every whimper. Oh friends, God help us to get deeper, grander, and more wonderful than this sentimental nonsense of the world. God help us to have a real love that is centered in Jesus Christ, hearts that are heart to heart with Him in His longing for souls to win. What do you say?

When people are converted they do not lose all their brain cells. Never think they do. Speaking of Satan:

“Many who are really conscientious, and who desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ, he hopes to gain the victory. We should not make self the center, and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him” *Steps to Christ*, page 71-72.

Oh, that God may thrill our souls with the simplicity and wonder of that. Somebody here is going to get hold of this. Somebody is going to say, I have been living an egocentric life too long. Somebody is going to say, I am done with this selfishness, and I am done with this thinking about myself all the time, even in my religious experience. I am going to quit it. Well, the way to quit it is not to stand there and keep looking at yourself and begin to weep. Turn the thoughts to Jesus.

Thank God He did not put eyes in the back of our head. When you and I look to Jesus we cannot look back. It is impossible.

Put away thoughts of yourself. Dismiss your fears. Resolutely turn the eyes of faith on Jesus. He says:

“Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”
Isaiah 45:22.

We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety as to whether we shall be saved.

We say, Oh, but I want to be saved.

Yes. Some people are so selfish they want to be saved. Let me tell you, when once the gaze is fixed upon Jesus, the life finds its center, and we can wheel out with Him into a great orbit and forget all about ourselves. Let Him take us to heaven. He will take us there much better than we can ever take ourselves.

Jesus said to Peter and his brethren there at the lake, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft. He was teaching them how to catch men, how to win souls. We stay too near the edge. We are too afraid of what might happen to us, what somebody might say about us, or that we might fail. Oh, we think it would be awful if we would fail. We would be humiliated. We try to speak when we are not used to speaking, or try to testify when we are not used to it, or try to speak to a soul about giving himself to Jesus when we are not used to it. Oh, we think something might happen to us. Away with all those thoughts. We should not make self the center.

The trouble with the egocentric's life is simply that everything in the universe is of importance according to how it affects me. Let me give an illustration. I am getting very practical, but I think we ought to.

If I am a young man of draft age, the whole question of whether the world is plunged into war or not is of interest to me primarily and basically as to how it affects whether I go into the army or not. And that is what I think about. If I see the headlines, "War Eminent" I say I may get a call to the army.

You say, That is perfectly natural. Of course it is natural. But what we need is supernatural. We need to be lifted out of this human way of always interpreting everything as to how it is going to affect us. Leave that to God. He will take care of us. If God wants me in the army, He can get me there, even if all the world is at peace. And if God does not want me there, He can keep me out of it, even if all the world is at war. Can't He?

We should not make self the center. If a man with the egocentric idea sits on a committee and somebody suggests a plan to affect an institution or a church, what does he think about? The first thing he thinks about is how it is going to effect him. What is it going to do for him? Is it something that is going to interfere with him? Instead of looking at how it is going to affect the work, how is it going to affect the gathering in of souls, he is thinking how it will affect him.

There is something very closely related to that. It is when we have somebody close to us that we can be selfish for. Sometimes parents are that way about their children.

I knew a man once who thought that God stopped World War I just to keep his boy out of the army. You say, Wouldn't God be that interested in the boy? Don't misunderstand me. I believe God is very much interested in every individual. But I can think of at least several million other reasons for God to stop a war besides one boy.

There is a right way to believe God is interested in me, and it isn't the selfish way. If we will unselfishly commit our ways to God and to His Son Jesus Christ, and let God take care of us, God will, and we can plunge with God into orbit and go sailing around, illuminating the universe on the path that God has marked out. Oh, I want to enter into orbit with God, don't you. And thank God, there is not going to be any blow up one third of the way. No sir. When God brings out His stars, they shine forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). Not one fails (Isaiah 40:26).

Now I want to bring you to the supreme example of the egocentric life and the God centered life:

“Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and the world. Few think of its relation to God” *Education*, page 263.

Those who think of this thing think of its relation to themselves. Few think of its relation to God. I have trouble with my false teeth, and won't it be wonderful when Jesus comes and I won't have to wear these false teeth anymore? Somebody cheats me in a business deal. I wish Jesus would come and we wouldn't have to put up with dishonest thieves anymore.

Don't misunderstand me. I wouldn't say it is wicked to have those thoughts. I am just using it to illustrate what this is talking about. When most people think about the coming of Jesus being near or far away, they think about how it is going to affect them. You say, Sure. Why not?

That's the point. I trust we see why not. Oh, let us lift up our eyes on high and see a universe, and get our proper place in it. David got the lesson:

“When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him” Psalm 8:3-4.

We are valuable. We are wonderfully valuable to God. But we are not each one the center of the universe with everything revolving around us. Oh, no. Let's get into orbit. Let's get into our proper place. Let's find our place in the procession.

When most people think about the coming of Jesus and the finishing of the work they are thinking about how it is going to effect them. Few think of it in relation to God. What would it mean to think of its relation to God? What would it mean to be in orbit in such a way that we are drawn by that great heart of love and forget about ourselves? Listen:

“Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to

the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. . . .

“As the ‘whole creation groans and travails in pain together’ (Romans 8:26,22), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end. ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’” *Education*, page 263-264.

My dear friends, when we get that view of things there are a great many other things in the universe that are going to fit into their proper places. Some of them are going to be pretty small. Whether we have everything like we would want it—the food we eat, what we have to wear, the furniture we have, where we live, how people treat us, and what things people say about us—it is not going to bother us very much. We will be in orbit.

We will be attracted by the loving face of Jesus Christ. As we see the tears start in those eyes as sin after sin wounds His heart afresh, and as we grasp the wonderful thought that we can have a part in bringing all this suffering and sorrow to an end as we dedicate our life to the task of serving God and serving others, that is something to live for.

Once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. No more wandering around. We are in orbit. We have found our place. We know what it is. It isn't in reaching out and trying to get everybody doing what we want, ministering to us, catering to our whims. That will never bring the answer.

We have found a center, and it isn't us. It is Jesus Christ. We have found a center, and it isn't our plans. It is His plans. We have found a center, and it isn't our will. It is His will. We have found a center, and it isn't our career, our work, our ambition. It is His work.

Like Jesus we can say:

“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” John 4:34.

That is joy. That is satisfaction. It is the only answer. Thank God some are entering in and tasting it.

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