

# A Presentation of the Man

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores God's purpose for humanity to reflect His likeness through the characteristics of Christ as the ultimate standard.*

**Scripture:** Revelation 1:12

**Topics:** "Christlikeness", "Divine Purpose"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of understanding the characteristics of the Man whom God has ordained to judge the world, as revealed in Revelation 1. He stresses that God's ultimate intention is for humanity to be made in His image, and that our spiritual growth should reflect the likeness of Christ. The preacher highlights the necessity of aligning our lives with the qualities of Christ, such as authority, purity, and faithfulness, which are essential for fulfilling our divine calling. Sparks urges believers to examine their hearts and motivations, ensuring they are driven by a desire to glorify God rather than personal ambition. Ultimately, he calls for a deep, transformative encounter with Christ that compels us to pursue holiness and Christlikeness.

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## Transcript

Reading: Revelation 1:12-17; Acts 17:31.

In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the fact that it is IN a man that God has determined to judge the world, and we were seeing something of God's conception of the Man whom He has ordained to be the sphere and standard of His judgment. Now we are going on with that in a closer analysis, according to the characteristics of the Man as they are presented in the portion we have just read.

But first of all, I would seek to draw you strongly into the living present purpose of God in so speaking to us. I am so well aware that this can all be teaching, ideas, "truth" in a technical sense. Unless we are very careful, it may just remain that, and have no great effect upon us. We tried in our first message to bring everything into the realm of practical spiritual value, by pointing out the basis and background of all God's thoughts, purposes and dealings with man, as found in the original divine conception, when God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". The first, the constant, and the final intention of God is to make man LIKE HIMSELF. And the test of everything is just there -- how much we are like the Lord. It matters quite in a secondary way (and, apart from this, it matters not at all) how much teaching we give or have, or how much we do, if, governing and surrounding it all, there is not the one essential condition, that we are like the Lord and that our hearts are set more upon that than upon anything else; not upon the

work, not upon the teaching, not upon the success of our efforts in Christian activity, but simply upon being like the Lord. In the end that is going to be the determining factor as to how far we have apprehended Christ, how far we have understood Christianity, how far we have gone on in the spiritual life. All that matters is that people should be seeing in our lives, in a growing way, WHAT THE LORD IS LIKE, that there should be coming into view -- maybe all too slowly, maybe in all too small a measure -- something of the likeness of the Lord in us. In all that follows in these messages, I do want that you should realise that that is the thing that matters -- it is all unto that.

Now, if God is set upon having man like this and He still is, for He never, in Adam's failure, abandoned the intention to make man in His own image, after His own likeness -- if it is like that, with all the resultant purposes which we mentioned in our previous study, it is necessary for the Lord to show us something of what He is like. We must see what the Lord is like in order that, seeing, we may adjust to that, and then commit to the Spirit of God and press toward that attainment. So, when we come to this next part of the first chapter of the Revelation, the Man presented in His characteristics, we have the answer to that need. What is the man like that God is seeking, and has already secured in this Man -- the standard, the model? What is he like?

Just one more word. In the light of what we were saying earlier as to God's intention for man, in likeness to Himself, fulfilling a tremendous vocation and then coming to eternal glory, in that we have the interpretation and the explanation of the spirit and attitude of the apostle Paul, as we have it expressed in the third chapter of the letter to the Philippians, where, "counting all the gains as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord", he says that he "presses toward the mark for the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus". It drew him out in that exhaustive way, in that utter way, that complete abandonment. "Not that I have already obtained..."; "but one thing I do..."; "if by any means...". It is not that Paul was seeking salvation, but that he had seen the meaning of Christ as God's standard and God's goal for man. He had seen what the "on-high calling" was -- namely, to fellowship with Christ in the position which had been given Him by the Father.

So, you see, it is something rather important that engages us at this time -- far more important than information and instruction in the Bible. It is nothing less than our very destiny, according to God's fullest intention. It is what God means in our having a being at all -- and it is possible for us to fail in this, to miss it.

### Christ God's Horizon

Let us now come, then, to this section in Revelation 1. Here is the Man who, as we said in our previous meditation, has been tested -- tested down to the utter obedience of the death of the cross. "I became dead" -- He was approved by His perfect faithfulness; and as the seal of His approval He was raised -- "I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death." "Now I am in a position of absolute authority over all the forces which have been set against the fulfilment of God's purpose."

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. 22:13). That must be set at the beginning of this contemplation. "I am the Alpha and the Omega." In that word in Acts 17:31, "the man whom he hath ordained", the Greek word "ordained" implies "the man whom He has made His horizon, His scope, His sphere, His circumference, His set bound": and in the Alpha and Omega you have the bound of God, the beginning and the end. Christ governs everything from the beginning to the end; nothing is going to escape Christ, nothing is going to escape God as to Christ. That is very important; we may come to that later in a more

particular way. But let it be understood that God sums up and ties up everything in Christ. There are many people who believe in God, who would call themselves "God-fearing" people, but they leave out what Christ means, and they will not get through, they will not escape. God has made Christ the ordained one, the horizon of everything. Everything from God's standpoint is horizoned by Christ.

### The Son of Man

Now, having established the setting, the sphere -- "I turned to see the voice... And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man". "Son of man" -- that is governing. We are not going to get away from that, the Son of man. I need not remind you how often that title is used of Him, and how in the great majority of cases it was used by Himself of Himself; but it is helpful to remember how it came to be used in the first place. The title "Son of man", as used by the Lord of Himself, was first introduced at the time when He was rejected by the Jews.

Prophetically, this is quite clear from the Psalms. In the second psalm, you have the "heathen raging", "the rulers taking counsel together" "against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us". Then comes the response of the Lord in heaven to their rejecting, their casting out of the Anointed: "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee". Now that was quoted, as you know, in the prayer of the church in Acts 4, when it is mentioned that Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles, combined to kill the Lord's Anointed, and heaven responded again.

From Psalm 2 to Psalm 8 is not a far cry. In Psalm 2 you have the rejection of this Anointed One in the first place by the Jews. In Psalm 8 you have: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Adam never was the son of man, so in no full sense can it be made to apply to him, except prophetically and symbolically. When the Jews had rejected Christ as the Anointed and combined with the Gentiles and the rulers to cast Him out and to strip off His bands from them, He is brought back, not as the Jewish Messiah, but as the Son of man, which universal title went far beyond Israel. All men are gathered into that.

"I became dead." That is the story of their rejecting and their casting out, their thinking to have done with Him. Here He appears at the beginning of the book of the Revelation: "I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore". "I saw... in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man" -- not the Jewish Messiah, but the Son of man -- universal representation, inclusion.

It is MAN -- that is the point -- the MAN whom He has ordained. Do keep this all the time very much in mind, that what we have here is not only related to and bound up with Him as an isolated individual. He is representative of the corporate man whom God is taking out of the nations to bear His Name, and the things said here about Him are the features of that corporate man, as well as of every part of that corporate man, every individual man and woman. Keep that in mind, otherwise you will be looking at this objectively only, and it will not register anything in your own heart.

Let us now look at Him as He is given to us in John's account, fragment by fragment.

### A Garment Down to the Foot

The first thing is: "Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle". "A garment down to the foot." All I am going to say about this, because it is so largely reiteration, is that this is not the priestly garment, but the governmental garment. It is the garment of the governor, of the lord, of the judge. It is the Son of man in the full place -- "down to the foot" -- in the full place of authority and government. It is man representative in government, corresponding to what we said in our last meditation. "Thou madest him to have dominion." The very purpose of man's creation is that he might have dominion. I simply remind you that in the letter to the Hebrews, where Psalm 8 is quoted -- "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" and so on -- that is linked with: "Thou crownedst him with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:7). "We behold him... Jesus... crowned with glory and honour" -- just answering to the original intention of God.

#### A Golden Girdle at the Breasts

"Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle." The girdle is, as you know, a symbol of strength for action. This One is in action, that is quite clear, and He is girded with strength for action, invested with authority and endued with power for this administration. It is a golden girdle, depicting or symbolizing the divine nature. And "girt about at the breasts" is His faithfulness to the purpose and will of God -- His love, His faithful love. He is called in this book the "Faithful and True". (Rev. 3:14, 19:11).

These are spiritual features. Let us get away from the symbolism to the spiritual meaning, for we are involved in this, we are included in this. In this Son of man we are included, and if the purpose which is realised in Him as representative compasses us, includes us, the point is that THESE are the features which make up the purpose, THESE are the conditions which must obtain if God is going to reach His end in us. This is going to be applied to the churches, and here is the statement of the background against which God is working. What it amounts to is this: Here is God's inclusive thought, mind, standard; you are called with this great calling -- this is the on-high calling. You have got to come into line with that, into conformity to that. What is true in Him has to be true in you, the individual, and in the corporate, the church. "Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle". There is to be a heart devotion and faithfulness to the revealed thoughts of God concerning His people, concerning ourselves. There has got to be the strengthening of us by the divine nature to stand as God's administrative instrument to the world. There must be a heart strong with faithfulness to what is according to God -- gold-girdled breasts mean a heart strong in its faithful love and devotion to what is of God. We have got to be found there.

You can have all sorts of things as Christians, all sorts of Christian things; we can have all the things that the churches had, and yet find the finger of condemnation upon them, saying, "It is not good enough, it will not do, it does not justify; with all that, I cannot let you off". We can be very devoted to a teaching, to a movement, to any Christian work, very busy indeed in all that sort of thing; it may be very interesting or we may even be giving ourselves, pouring ourselves out to it; and yet behind it all there may be lacking some real love for the Lord Himself.

I would like to press that. It is so possible for us -- oh, God forgive us, we have all failed so terribly in this matter -- it is so possible for us to be poured out in the ministry, and yet to be slipping up all the time on things that are not pleasing to the Lord, our hearts not girded with the strength of a great faithful love to His thoughts. The enemy is always trying to counter our testimony by getting us to be in some way a contradiction, to be inconsistent. You find nothing like that in this One, nothing of that contradiction and inconsistency. His heart is wholly girded with faithful love to His Father's thoughts and will. Is there not a place for us to come to the Word of God a little more and see whether, after all, with all our Christian

activity and devotion, the Word of God is not against us on many things?

#### White Head and Hair

"His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow." What is this? Well, there are two things here. In the first place, there is the mark of all time extended, exhausted, lived out. There is such a thing, of course, as premature grey-headedness; there is such a thing as becoming grey-headed or white by reason of something abnormal; but the normal grey-headedness or white hair is a mark that time has been lived out, has been covered or is being encompassed and exhausted, and for a white-headed man to be in full vigour is a testimony to the fact that he has defeated time and all that that means. In this description of the exalted Christ, therefore, the whiteness means that all that belongs to time or corruption has been destroyed. This One is not a victim of time or time's conditions, of this world or this world's corruption: He outlives it, expands it, triumphs over it. Time means death, sooner or later; death means corruption triumphant. But this One is in full vigour, girded with strength and authority and standing forth. The further description is the picture of one in full vigour, full of energy. This is not an old man worn out. This is a young man, in youth, in vigour -- and white-headed. He has defeated all that time represents, death and corruption overcoming. His white hair is not a mark of old age. It is a mark of eternity triumphing over time. He is as the "ancient of days" (Dan. 7:9).

What is the spiritual value of that? Well, you see, it means this, that the man according to God will have vigour to the end, will have spiritual energy to the end. I do not know what you feel about that, but I am in revolt against finishing up in exhaustion and emptiness, having no more to give to the Lord's people because I am too old. There may be a challenge along that line, but my spirit revolts against that. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psalm 92:14). We read that "the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). This does not imply that circumstances get easier, that the way becomes simpler and less complex, that the path becomes more and more cheerful. No, it does not imply that at all -- rather the reverse. But I do believe it must mean that inwardly, while the "outward man is decaying", the "inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). That is something to claim, to lay hold of -- to beat time.

So let us stop looking for sympathy by saying we are getting old. We do far too much of that. The white hair of the exalted Christ is a mark of corruption transcended in moral perfection, and that is a mark of energy.

#### Eyes as of a Flame of Fire

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." Here again there are two things. The eyes are the seeing organs and faculties, and this -- as is borne out by a lot more that follows in this book -- speaks of spiritual intelligence and knowledge. Later you will come upon seven spirits of God. That is the perfection of spiritual intelligence, if you look at the context. And here we have the eyes, the organ, as a flame of fire. The fire searches, the fire tests, the fire finds out, and the One here is in a state of active knowledge. He is finding out. God will judge the world in the Man whom He has ordained, and it will be because of His perfect spiritual intelligence and the power of it.

That is not so remote as it may sound in a statement like that. When we come face to face with the Lord, with the Son of man, we know that He knows. We do not take that as a theory, as just truth. We cannot come into the Lord's presence and be alone with the Lord without knowing that He knows. It is no use excusing ourselves, it is no use arguing, it is no use covering up, it is useless to try to get round it. You

know that He knows what you are not wanting to uncover. You are set in the light of His countenance and you cannot get away from it. His eyes not only see, but they search. They not only know, but they test. They are not merely organs, but there is something about these organs that registers on you, and you know you have to answer to the Lord. It is well for us to recognise that.

But let us still remember that this Son of man is representative. Would it not be grand if our life, our testimony, our ministry, were like this -- that those whom we meet, and those who hear us, have to say, "How did he know all about me? Who has been telling him?" -- and they will not believe that no one has been telling and reporting and passing on. Oh, that it might be like that in our ministry, that people have to say: "No one could have known that about me but God; that is God who has spoken to me and dealt with me. No one knew that, that was something hidden in my life from everybody else. God only knew that, but it has been dragged out into the light."

That is the meaning of "His eyes were as a flame of fire", and God would have something like that about us. There being those other features which have been mentioned, this should be one of the consequences, that our presence has the effect of making sinners uncomfortable, making sin incapable of remaining hidden, bringing things to the light. It will mean trouble -- nevertheless it is very much better than pouring out words in addresses and teaching and nothing resulting. Oh, that God might be more in our lives to bear this flaming witness against iniquity, against sin.

The eyes are linked with the other features. The eyes are connected, for instance, with the heart: for this kind of thing -- these eyes as a flame, this witness, this knowing and this effecting -- is by way of a pure heart. The pure in heart see God (Matt. 5:8). Effectiveness of witness is based upon purity of heart.

#### Feet Like Burnished Brass

The next thing here is: "His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace". Feet speak of our goings and our ways. They are the means by which we move. And what makes us move, what makes us go? There are some people who have no reason for many of their movements. They just go running about all over the place without any rhyme or reason, without any sense at all. There are a lot of people who just move by impulse. The Lord Jesus never did that. Sometimes people tried to persuade Him to move, and He would not -- they could not get Him to move; sometimes they tried to get Him to go one way, and He went another; sometimes they tried to stop Him from going -- and He would go.

But in His goings, His movements, His refusing to move, these feet of His were governed by a certain incentive and motive. Motive should govern our movements. Why did you do that? What is your motive? This is very searching. Why did you go and live at so-and-so, in such-and-such a place? You found a nice house there, very comfortable surroundings? Why? Either your motive is the Lord's interests, or it is your own. Why do you go to this place and that? Why these movements in your life? By what are they motivated? What is the incentive of your life?

Now, in the case of this One, this Son of man, you can see in His walk here on earth the motive and the incentive which governed. It was not the judgments of men, not the interests of the flesh, not the prizes and appeals of this world, not the shunning of suffering. He moved only under the mighty incentive of His Father's will. His feet were purged in the furnace as to their motives. The strength of His goings, like brass, was the strength of the divine approval, because His heart was set in the ways of the Lord. Irresistible are His goings, strong because pure. Tested and tried are His motives. The Lord bring us into line with the Son of man. In all our motives and incentives, our objects and our interests, the things which influence us

this way and that way, where we go, how we go, may He bring us more fully under the government of His Spirit.

#### A Voice as the Voice of Many Waters

"His voice as the voice of many waters." I think the meaning of that is quite obvious. It speaks of power, commanding power. You cannot stand against a flood -- everything has to yield and go with it. They said of Him when here that He spoke "as one having authority" (Matt. 7:29). There is a QUALITY about His speaking. It is not only the volume, the sound as of many waters, but there is such a quality about it. It is, in other words, not just the force of His voice; it is not that He is shouting; it is the character, the quality of it. He speaks, and because He speaks out of a pure heart, out of this utter devotion to the will of the Father, out of this life which has no motives or incentives other than to be well-pleasing unto God -- because He speaks thus, He has the support of heaven and nothing can withstand Him.

I believe our witness, our testimony, our ministry, would be much more powerful, persuasive -- irresistible -- if we were more like the Son of man. That is what I am getting at. If you and I want to speak with influence, with power, to speak so that something happens, it must and can only be in so far as there is Christlikeness behind the speaking, if what is said is true in the life. This matter of speaking with power is very practical. It is by the Holy Spirit in a crucified and risen man. "I became dead,... I am alive..." A crucified and risen man is the vehicle of this speaking to such effect and with such power. On the day of Pentecost, they were truly crucified and risen men; in a very real way they had been crucified with Christ and were risen together with Him; and a voice that is going to carry weight has got to be the voice of a crucified and risen man or woman. If it can be detected, when we speak to others, that there is self-glory influencing us; that, as we speak, we are influenced by any motive, any interest, any consideration other than the glory of God, the pleasure of the Lord; if it is not true, and manifestly true, in our speaking, in our preaching, in our teaching, in our talking to others, that we have been crucified to the flesh, that ours is a risen life with the Lord: if that is not true, there will be no power in our testimony, no power in our words. Power in speaking arises only from this spiritual experience of being crucified with Christ and raised together with Him.

#### Seven Stars in His Hand

"He had in his right hand seven stars." The stars, He says later on, are the angels of the churches, those who have influence and power in the churches. A star is that which governs or is supposed to govern, to govern in the night. It is a subordinate governing instrument, subordinate to the sun and moon, and here the stars, these angels -- whoever they may be, whatever they may be; we will not stay to discuss that -- represent the place of authority, the governmental position, which is held in the church. He has them in His right hand, and the right hand, according to the Old Testament, is a symbol, first of all of honour and then of power. Honour and power -- the two things go together. His authority to deal with the matter of government and influence is because of the honour and the power of His moral position.

#### A Sharp Sword out of His Mouth

"Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." We know from other Scriptures what this two-edged sword is. It is the Word of God; its action is for laying bare, for discovering. His Word is a Word that lays open, lays bare and gets down to the inner recesses of our thoughts, our motives.

#### A Shining Face

"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The countenance sums up everything. It is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "The sun shining in its strength." You may put up your parasol and it will destroy it! The sun shining in his strength knows no resistance, no restraint. There is no shrinking in timidity and fear on the part of the sun. There is no shame that makes it want to veil its face. There is no uncertainty about the sun. There may be about the weather! -- but there is no uncertainty about the sun. He is forthright, he is downright. He has no reason to shrink, to hold back, to be afraid, to be timid. There is boldness, there is assurance, there is certainty. I think that is what is meant by the sun shining in its strength. It is terrible when you get right into the real strength of the sun. The sun shining in its strength. It is terrible when it does not say, "I am very sorry, I would not do it if I could help it"; it just does it! There is certainty, definiteness, positiveness about the sun shining in its strength.

God needs His church like that. He desires that it should be possible to say of it: "There is no doubt about it with them, there is no question where they are concerned; they know the Lord! If you touch them, you will get a positive note; you will find something that gets rid of all your doubt, all your uncertainty, all your questions." Oh, for lives like that! There is so much of the deviation and the "shadow cast by turning" about us. One day you will find us all right and the next day you will find us all wrong. For a little while we are shining, and then our sun has gone in. You never can be sure how you will find some people, as to their spiritual life, from day to day.

This Son of man is not like that. It is a wonderful thing to go to those parts of the world where, when you get up in the morning, you do not look out to see if it is raining. You never do it. You know that, for the greater part of the year, as sure as the day comes the sun comes, and it shines. For a large part of the year in those parts of the world you do not talk about the weather. You know quite well that the sun will be there before you, if you are not very early, and that it will go on. Oh, for our lives to be like that -- sure, certain, reliable, trustworthy, to be counted upon, positive, definite, real. "The sun shining in his strength." It is one of the glories of God that there is with Him "no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning". In all this, remember, it is the Son of man to whom we are to be conformed.

### The Effect of Seeing Christ

And finally, the effect. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead." Now two things must be linked together. John commenced by saying: "I was in the Spirit". He finished this presentation by saying: "I fell at his feet as one dead". What is the effect of this contemplation? What is the verdict? If you are in the Spirit, there will be an effect in the contemplation of Jesus Christ. There must be something as a result. "I was in the Spirit... I fell at his feet as one dead." What do YOU say about this? I am not saying that my presentation is as good as John's, I am not saying that I am as inspired as he was, but we have been contemplating the same Lord, we have been seeking to bring Christ into view -- His excellencies and glories and what He means for us. Can we be other than deeply affected? Is there not something challenging that brings us down inwardly before the Lord? "Am I not found out? Am I not smitten? Do I not realise how altogether short of this I come? Do I not see that it is unto this that the Lord has called? Am I not moved to make my calling and election sure? Is there not the inspiring of something of that 'one thing I do... I press on toward the goal' (Phil. 3:13,14)?"

What is the effect? What is our verdict? A mental judgment upon the subject, the subject matter, the presentation? What is it? We have failed -- I have failed, you have failed -- if we are not touched deeply in our hearts over this and come down before the Lord to make the necessary adjustment. If we are not moved with a new incentive to be like Him, it is all a failure. God forbid! If it is not so with you, will you ask

the Lord to use the sword, the two-edged sword, to lay bare?

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