

The First Adam and Last Adam

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the profound differences between the First Adam and the Last Adam, emphasizing the significance of Christ's obedience and the believer's new identity in Him.

Scripture: Psalm 97:2, John 3:6, Romans 5:19, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:19, Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Redemption", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam, Jesus Christ, in God's redemptive plan. He explains that while the first Adam became a living soul, the last Adam is a life-giving spirit, representing a new creation that begins in heaven. The sermon highlights that through Christ's obedience and perfection, believers are made complete in Him, and the Holy Spirit empowers them to live out this new life. Sparks stresses that spiritual growth involves learning to live in accordance with the Spirit, moving from the natural to the spiritual, and ultimately walking in obedience through the strength of Christ within us.

Transcript

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul.

The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

We are brought to the consideration of the Lord Jesus in the redemptive plan of God, and we want to begin with Him in heaven, for everything in God's purpose now begins with Christ in heaven. It is important to recognize that. It may seem very simple, very elementary, and it may even be that you say: 'Surely it commenced with Christ coming into the world, with Christ on the Cross!' No! It does not! It commences with Christ in heaven, Christ in glory, Christ exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Apart from that the earthly life of the Christ lacked the essential dynamic. Everything commences in God's new creation with Christ in heaven.

We notice this contrast: "The first man Adam... a living soul. The last Adam... a life-giving spirit." The first Adam produced after his kind, a race according to his own constitution, and in Adam by nature we are that, a living soul. Adam, if he had gone on the straight way in obedience, would have reached a point where he would have been changed in his constitution and nature from what the first Adam was as a living soul to what the last Adam is, but he did not go that straight way. Now God's thought is no longer with the

first Adam, but with the last Adam, and in the last Adam God has already realized His original thought.

It is a tremendously important and valuable thing to recognize that the Lord Jesus in heaven now represents the fact that what was in God's thought originally, and that for which He created Adam probationally and potentially, is an accomplished and finished thing in the Person of the Lord Jesus, now. That He has got right through to the end of that and it is finished, it is completed; in the Lord Jesus God has a Man. And inasmuch as He is the "Firstborn among many brethren", and is the Head of the creation, all His race are in Him complete. We turn aside to the thought about the Body of Christ to get that made clear. Paul speaks of the Body as having many members, and all the members, being many, are one Body; so also is THE Christ. The article is there in the Greek. That is, THE Christ is a Body of many members, with Christ as sovereign Head, so that "the last Adam" is a collective and inclusive title.

In Christ in heaven God has His Man completed according to His original thought, and in that Man, who is the racial Firstborn, He has His race as represented in perfection, completeness. When we come into Christ by faith we enter, SO FAR AS POSITION IS CONCERNED, as full a perfection as ever we shall have, though we remain here for generations. In Christ we are as perfect as we ever shall be. What we are in ourselves will mean a process, but, so far as our POSITION in Him is concerned, we are perfect in Christ.

What is this last Adam? He is different from the first Adam in that He is a life-giving Spirit, not merely a living soul. Following on the definition in this fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians we have:

"So also it is written... that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is soulical; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such as they also that are heavenly."

The seed of Christ is essentially spiritual and heavenly; that is why everything begins in heaven. You can no longer know Christ after the flesh. You can only know Christ after the Spirit now. You can no longer take hold of Him in the flesh; you can only take hold of Him in the Spirit now. You can no longer have fellowship with Him on the earth as of this earth; you can only have fellowship with Him now in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; the spiritual and the heavenly. And such are they of this new generation. In their very being they are spiritual and heavenly. No longer of this world, and no longer of this natural or soulical order. They are essentially spiritual.

Before we follow that further we want to note this other thing: that the second Man was also put on probation, as was the first. He was put on probation to be tried and tested on exactly the same question as was the first Adam, that of obedience; and to be brought to a certain point of maturity, as was Adam. The Lord Jesus was put under conditions of testing before heaven, and all heaven was interested in that testing. All heaven was interested in the testing of the first Adam, and all heaven was interested in the testing of the last Adam. After the first phase of the testing in the wilderness angels came and ministered. They had been watching! In the hour of the deepest of all the testings, in the garden of Gethsemane, an angel came and ministered. It was before heaven that this testing was going on!

The fact of the testing need not be tarried with longer. Two other things remain: the nature of the testing, and the object, or the issue, of the testing.

The nature of the testing was through three years of walk under temptation; temptation from without, and certainly not from within. Through those three years, what was taking place in His life was not atoning or

vicarious, but He was being watched, observed, under the play of forces upon Him to see His reaction. He took the place of the sweet-savour offering during the three years, and His life was a sweet savour unto God. He was offering Himself to God through those three years, but not as an offering for sin, not an atoning offering. He was offering Himself to God as a sweet-savour offering for the good pleasure of God, for God's satisfaction, so that God could have a Man under continuous trial and testing before His eye, a Man who would not in any way develop a flaw, a blemish, a spot, a wrinkle, a stain or any such thing.

The other form of the testing, the probation, was in the passion when He was made sin, and, being made sin for us, He who knew no sin, God Himself had to withdraw, turn His face away, and deny Him. Then even under that strain He remained faithful and obedient. I have no doubt whatever that the cup which He was facing, and over which He had His supreme battle in the garden, was the cup of His Father's denial. For Him that had to be a part of the price, but in the presence of that cup He fought through to victory: "Not my will, but thine...". Heaven was so concerned about that aspect of the battle that heaven came in to succour Him when He had got through in spirit. He was on probation, under test. The question was one of 'obedience unto death, yea, the death of the Cross'; and the death of the Cross, in its deepest meaning, was being forsaken of God. He was obedient.

The object and the issue of the testing was perfecting. He was perfect, but He was made perfect. He was perfect, and yet He was perfected. The Word distinctly tells us that He was "made perfect through suffering", and "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered". While there was no sin in Him, He had to move toward a position as representing man which He could only reach through being tested out as man. He reached the position that, while He was perfect, yet He was perfected. He reached a point of finality as Man which no man had ever reached before; and when He was perfected through suffering, God had got His Son as in eternal Godhead, but a Man - through trial and probation - at the point where He intended the first Adam to come. When He had got a Man there He took Him away from this world and put Him in heaven. Why? Because conformity to the image of that Man was not going to be on the ground of flesh and blood, but it was going to be a spiritual thing. God was going to commence, not where He commenced with Christ, but where He ended with Christ. You and I begin where God has finished with Christ. That is one of the most blessed truths that it is possible for us to apprehend, if we could apprehend it. God does not start with us where He started with the first Adam. He commences with us where He finished with the last Adam. That is, God is working on the basis of having already a perfect humanity. He has put the last Adam in heaven, and there is the image, there is the model, there is the racial Man, in whom the race is already.

The second thing is that He sends forth the Holy Spirit from heaven. The New Testament phrase is: "The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Where is that? Where Christ is, where God's perfected Son is. Sent down from Him! What for? As the Spirit of all that Christ is in heaven. All that perfection that Christ is in heaven comes down in the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit! What have we received? We have received into our inner being the Spirit of Christ in heaven.

The first phase of that is our new birth. What is our new birth? It is the life of God's last Adam. He is "a life-giving spirit". The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the life-giving spiritual last Adam. The terms sound somewhat technical, but I am keeping closely to the Scripture. The Holy Spirit comes as Christ, as what Christ is, and gives life to those who believe on the Lord Jesus. We say that we pass from death unto life, that we receive the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord, that is, we are born anew, we are born of Him. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So we are born of Him, the last Adam, who is a life-giving spirit, and in the innermost reality of our being we are living spirit.

That is what is born from above. It is from above, and therefore it is not earthly, but heavenly. The nature of the new birth is that we are life and spirit, and heavenly, inwardly a living spirit, made to live by the very life of the Lord Jesus, and because that is from above it is heavenly. So God has here in this earth something which does not belong to this earth at all, and which does not belong to the first Adam race, something which is utterly different from the first Adam, and altogether apart from the earth. God has here that which is of Christ, and that which is heavenly. The development of that, of course, is the whole history of spiritual growth, but that is where we begin, and that is the nature of the new birth.

We have got the perfected humanity of the Lord Jesus in infant form (if I may put it that way) at our new birth, and spiritual growth is simply the development of that in us. It is what the Apostle Paul speaks of as Christ being "fully formed" in us (Galatians 4:19 - Gk.): "Until Christ be fully formed in you." Christ in what He is introduced, as it were, as a babe at our new birth, and the course of spiritual experience is the formation of Christ in us unto fullness. While this relates to the Church in completion, it has a personal meaning.

God did not, because of Adam's failure and sin, wipe out that race, destroy it, put it out of existence and make another creation. God is doing a much more magnificent thing than that. In the midst of all that He is introducing something and building up something which is taking ascendancy over that, and your spiritual experience, and mine, is simply the progressive ascendancy of the last Adam over the first; of the spiritual over the soulical, the natural; the heavenly over the earthly. That is the course of our life. It is progressive conformity to the image of His Son. The Word says: "Be not conformed to this age, but be ye transformed by the making anew of your mind" (Romans 12:2). It is only another way of putting the same thing.

So, in the presence of the first Adam (which, mark you, in God's judicial act has been set aside but not annihilated - set aside judicially and no longer recognized as standing before God, yet remaining), as we walk in obedience, the law upon which God counts for all the realization of His purpose is the last Adam triumphing over the first Adam, taking ascendancy in us, having already taken full ascendancy in heaven in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

All that means that we are learning Christ. The Apostle said: "Ye did not so learn Christ" (Ephesians 4:20). He used that phrase in a specific connection, but it can be used quite generally and applied in this way, that our business is to 'so learn Christ'. And it is an education which begins with A, B, C. It is an education which begins in infancy, and the wisest man after the first Adam does not know anything more about the last Adam than a little child just born into this world. The one who may be most confident and self-reliant in the first Adam has got to learn how to take a first step in the last Adam, and very often makes some tumbles in learning how to take even a first step. On that hangs all the doctrine of the Epistles: walking after the Spirit. That is something new - another kind of walk. We are not natural, but spiritual and therefore this is something altogether different, and nature (that is, our relationship and our inheritance from the first Adam) gives us no help here. You will look in vain to nature to help you walk after the Spirit. You may be the wisest after the first Adam, but that can give you nothing for the second Adam. You have come into a new realm where it is not natural knowledge but spiritual knowledge, and "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them..." (1 Corinthians 2:14). What is true in walk and knowledge is true of every other thing that makes up life. Is food a part of life? Well, you are careful about your food. The natural man knows more or less what suits him and what he wants. Yes! We have to learn something new about spiritual food. You know that you need food for your new creation; you know you need spiritual food; and as you go on you know what spiritual food is, and you know what is not spiritual food that assumes to be spiritual food. You are

discovering by a new spiritual - shall I say? - instinct, understanding, discernment, perception what is food and what is not food, spiritually.

What does all this amount to? The food, and the knowledge, the understanding, the strength, the walk, are not abstractions, and they are not things in themselves. THEY ARE CHRIST! He is the food; He is made unto us wisdom. The whole business of the life of the child of God is to learn how to live on Christ, how to make Christ their life at every point, for God has made Him to be all, and summed up everything in Him.

Let us focus on one thing: as to where Adam failed and where Christ triumphed. It was on the question of obedience. Adam did not reach God's appointed end because he failed in obedience. Christ did reach God's appointed end representatively, because of obedience. Now what is righteousness? Righteousness is the all-inclusive virtue. If you go through the Word of God you will find that everything is gathered up into that word "righteousness". Whatever may be the forms of sin, all of them are gathered into that - righteousness or unrighteousness. Is it theft? It is unrighteousness! Is it idolatry? It is unrighteousness! Whatever it is, that is the word which expresses it. It is not so much the thing in itself, it is what it means of unrighteousness before God. Righteousness is "the foundation of his throne" (Psalm 97:2), which means that all His government is upon a basis of righteousness. All God's governmental activities are upon a basis of righteousness. All is summed up into one question of righteousness and unrighteousness. The ultimate issue for man's judgment or man's salvation is the issue of righteousness.

Come to the Roman letter, and you see quite well that "justification" is only another word for righteousness - being made righteous before God. The whole argument there is: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10), and then, out of that, comes all that is said about justification. Justification is simply to find that righteousness, to produce that righteousness, to bring to a position of righteousness.

What is unrighteousness? Disobedience! What is righteousness? Obedience! How did Christ provide God with the righteousness that He demanded? By His obedience, His utter obedience. How did Adam bring this race under condemnation, that is, take it off the basis of righteousness, and, therefore, of acceptance with God? By disobedience! So that the obedience of Christ provides righteousness. "Christ Jesus, who was made unto us... righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30). How? Because of His perfect obedience.

That obedience of the Lord Jesus was as Man for man. It was representative obedience. His being in heaven means that there is the virtue of a perfected obedience in Him, satisfying God for you and for me, and we stand upon a basis of righteousness because of the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus. Then we are brought by the obedience of one Man (that is Romans 5) into the presence of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus, to stand without judgment and without any fear of judgment. No condemnation in Him, the inclusive, representative, racial Man. We come into acceptance with God because of His obedience, but, having been put in acceptance with God, our business is to walk in the obedience into which we have been planted. How can we walk in obedience? How are you and I going to keep on in obedience? The natural man cannot do it! The Adam man has proved helpless in this. How are we going to do it? The Spirit of the obedient One is in us, to be the strength of His obedience to us. 'Lord, I cannot of myself be obedient, BUT You, as having already triumphed in this matter of obedience, are in me; I live on Your strength in this matter.' That is living by Christ, and that is walking in obedience by reason of the Holy Spirit energizing. "It is God which worketh" - energizeth is the word - "in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

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