

The First Adam and the Last

by T. Austin-Sparks

God's objective in redeeming man is to conform the race to the likeness of its Head, Christ, and to make us like Him in every way.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:45

Topics: "New Creation", "Headship of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound distinctions between the first Adam and the last Adam, Christ, highlighting that while both represent headship of two races, the last Adam transcends the first in spiritual order and purpose. He argues that God's redemptive work is not about restoring humanity to the state of the unfallen Adam, but about conforming believers to the image of Christ, the life-giving Spirit. The sermon underscores that the last Adam, being of a heavenly order, enables believers to partake in a new creation that is beyond the earthly limitations of the first Adam. Sparks calls for a recognition of Christ's headship and lordship, which is essential for experiencing the fullness of God's purpose in our lives. Ultimately, he encourages believers to embrace their identity in Christ and to live in accordance with their new spiritual reality.

Transcript

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit... 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 are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (let us also bear the image of the heavenly - Margin)" 1 Cor. 15:45,47-49.

Here we have some distinctions and definitions which are of the greatest importance to our spiritual understanding and progress. There is one similarity, but for the rest all stands in contrast.

Adam a Figure of Christ as Representing Headship

The one similarity is in the same name - Adam, the first Adam, the last Adam, signifying, as we know, two heads of two races. That is a simple and well-known thing, that both Adam the first and Adam the last stand by Divine order and appointment as the heads of races. In them headship is gathered up by God. To that we shall probably come back presently, but now, with just that mention of the one similarity, we move at once into the differences: and the differences are immense.

The Radical Difference Between Christ and Adam

Of course, on the face of it, we agree and assent to the fact that there is a great deal of difference between Adam and Christ. Without any thought we would agree to that, but it represents something more than we have perhaps recognized. The whole of this statement, this section of the letter, is tremendous in what it is signifying, especially in this matter of difference. What I mean is this: I think there are a lot of Christian people who have the idea that what God is seeking to do through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus in atonement for sin, in the salvation and recovery of man from his lost state, is to get him back to the place where Adam was before he fell. Now, have you got that idea? Is that your idea of redemption, that you just undo everything that went wrong in and through Adam and restore things to that unfallen state in which, Adam was before he fell? If that is so, you are entirely wrong. God is not seeking to do any such thing. He is not conforming to the first Adam at all, not even to an unfallen first Adam. He has gone immeasurably beyond an unfallen first Adam. He has left him behind altogether and has One who is an entirely different order of being from the unfallen Adam. The first Adam was a living soul; the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. The first man was of the earth, earthy; the last is of heaven, heavenly. Therefore "as we have borne the image of the earthy, also bear the image of the heavenly." That marginal rendering I think, is a very good alternative, because it does not imply that all will bear the image of the heavenly. Let us make sure. However, we can leave the marginal suggestion for the moment and see what this says.

This heavenly Man, this last Adam, this life-giving Spirit, is of an entirely different order from unfallen Adam, of a higher order altogether. Now, that does not mean that the first Adam; had he not fallen but been obedient, would not have come to a time when he would have been transfigured and have taken on the heavenly order, been conformed to that order. But that is not our point. That might have been. I do not know whether we have very much to go on other than assumption or deduction in saying such a thing. Probably it would have been, but it was not. It did not happen, and therefore Adam remained of a certain order; and God's full order is not that, that is not God's full thought. That was not the goal to which God was working. God has something transcendently greater than unfallen first Adam. His last Adam, His second Man, is of a heavenly order, a spiritual order, and, blessed be God, an order - and this is the whole point of 1 Cor. 15 - which cannot know death. 1 Cor. 15 is the chapter of resurrection and what the resurrection order of things is. It deals with what the resurrection body is, and what the risen man, unlike the first Adam, is not capable of, and what the risen man is beyond the possibility of knowing, namely, corruption. Therefore of the last Adam it is written, "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10). You see the tremendous difference. So do not let us drop down on to that poor level of an unfallen first Adam. It might be a great deal better than our present natural condition, but it is not good enough for God, and it should not be good enough for us. Therefore, "let us bear the image of the heavenly". There is your first basic and great distinction between the two, the first and the last.

Conformity to the Image of God's Son

That brings clearly into view what God's objective is. Having made the Lord Jesus the Head of His new creation, His new race, His objective is to conform the race to the likeness of its Head. Christ becomes the one object in the eye of God concerning which and unto which He is doing all His works. Perhaps at some other time, we might look at that fully and see how all the works of God in the first creation were toward, and headed up into the bringing in of the man after His own likeness and image. And the Lord is now working in the new creation, in you and in me, to conform us to the image of His Son. We may take it that God has no other work on hand. God has only one work on hand, and that is His work. That is to be taken account of when we realize the Lord is trying to do something. The Lord is at work. We may not be able to

see what He is doing at the time, but if we ask the one general, all-governing question, What is it that the Lord is seeking to do? the answer is one, and comprehends everything, every method of God, every means of God, every interest of God. It is reduced to one simple, comprehensive thing: He is seeking to reproduce His Son in us, to conform us to the image of His Son.

From eternity, God has been governed by a great desire to express Himself, and all creation is God's way of seeking to express Himself. Now, when we look at the Lord Jesus, we see God realizing His desire, and then, when we look at His activity with us, we see God seeking in this yet more fully extended way, beyond the individual Person of the Lord Jesus, to reproduce Himself in the Church which is Christ's Body; that is, to make it Christ in expression. That is very simple and very elementary; but this heavenly order of which Christ is the Head is what God is seeking to bring about in a new race.

A Life-giving Spirit - Begetting in His Own Likeness

Then the next thing is this: the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. Thank God for that! You see, Adam could only produce after his kind, and his kind was an earthly order, a soul order of man. He could not produce after the full, complete and final thought of God. It was not in him to reproduce himself in an order above his own level. Even as unfallen, he could not do that. The Lord Jesus is bound by the same law, but the difference is that as a life-giving Spirit, producing after His own kind, He has power to accomplish the Divine purpose, by bringing in this heavenly, this spiritual order.

You see, that brings us back to the simple presentation of these things in the Gospels, where we have all Divine principles in just germ form. There, in Matthew 3, the Lord Jesus emerges from the river, the type of the grave, in which one race has been representatively set aside and blotted out from the eye of God, and in His emergence, the new race is brought into view in its new Head - Jesus Christ. Immediately that Head and race are in view the Holy Spirit comes upon Him, and from that moment, every movement, every word, every time in His life, is by the energy and direction of the Spirit. The next step, as we have noticed was, "Then was Jesus led of the Spirit": and so it was to the end. You have, then, a new race in view set forth in its Head, and in union, as one with Him, not as two, the Spirit with the Son becoming the energy by which the end shall be reached - a life-giving Spirit. The Lord Jesus in us, the Holy Spirit in us, which means the same thing in effect, is the energy and power to produce or reproduce after His own kind. That makes a heavenly order possible.

What Baptism Signifies

Now, that is a very simple word bringing you right back to the kindergarten, but it leads up to our testimony this afternoon. What are we doing? Having a baptismal service, baptizing people, following the steps of the Master? Is that all? No, we are testifying to this immense thing, that the creation of which we are a part by nature is no longer the creation in which we voluntarily live, but which for us is a closed realm because God closed it. It is shut down in burial, and now there is but One in view, our racial Head, the Lord Jesus. We are baptized into Him and as Head He governs all our concerns, interests, aspirations, and the one thing which is in view for us is conformity to His image; to be as He is, of the same order, heavenly and spiritual, in the inmost reality of our being. If you look more fully into the Word (but we will not do so now beyond this suggestion), you will find this, that everything to which God set His seal related to the making of the Lord Jesus Head. Pentecost was that. We have been asking in these messages what a life or church governed by the Holy Spirit will do. At Pentecost, the Spirit came upon the believers and they stood up, and began to speak: and what was it that they said as directed and governed and compelled by the

Holy Spirit? "God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). God hath made Him Lord, and, on the strength of that testimony, men in their thousands were brought under conviction. A new creation was ushered in and many were born that day. The last Adam abundantly saw His seed that day born from above, and God's attestation is always and only upon the ground of the established Headship and Lordship of Jesus Christ. You and I never come into the real living fulness of the Divine attestation until Jesus is Lord. We have blessing when we have Him as Saviour; but oh! the fulness is held up until He is established as Lord.

I trust that this is going to mean to us all a new acclamation of Jesus as Head, Sovereign Lord and Christ, and that will mean a move on in the heavenly order of things - conformity to His image.

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