

The Horizon of Christ - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the concept of the horizon of Christ, which is the basis of God's purpose and the means by which He fulfills His will.

Duration: 1:00:09

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-6, Psalm 91:11-12, Matthew 4:5-6, Matthew 16:24, Mark 14:53-55, Mark 14:58, Ephesians 1:22-23

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of living in God and living out from God, rather than using God for personal gain. The sermon emphasizes the significance of committing oneself to the will of God and understanding the implications of that commitment. The speaker highlights the testing that Jesus underwent during his 40 days and nights in the wilderness, which ultimately led to his crucifixion. The sermon also emphasizes the twofold work of God, which involves discipline and undoing in order to align with God's ultimate purpose in His Son.

Transcript

Our price as God's eternal horizon of all his interests and activities. We began these meditations by noting that the Bible focuses everything upon a primal rift and rupture in heaven and then on earth before the creation of this world and then after. Do not get far into our Bible before we are confronted with that situation.

First there is an antagonism in the universe and then that antagonism is introduced into this world. From that point the Bible opens up and pursues its course to the end where all that is seen to have been dealt with and settled and removed and all in Christ. We are shown that the cause of that universal rupture in heaven and on earth was insubordination to the will of God.

A will rising and opposing itself to the will of God. I will exalt myself. Independent action breaking away from the government of God alone.

All issuing, we are told, from a desire for superiority, for preeminence, for ascendance, for power. All these things which we find all through the Bible, through history, are the evil brood of pride, arrogance, conceit. First found in the great arch, enemy, and then man poisoned by him with the same thing.

After seeing that we noted exactly what it was that happened when that revolt took place, when that course of insubordination and independence was adopted, both in heaven and on earth. What happened was that those concerned in it, involved in it, implicated, a party to it, victimized by it, fell out of their place in God. Up to then, originally, there was but one realm, one realm of unity, of harmony, concord.

From that time there became two realms, and God brought forward at that point his horizon. The horizon within which the full restoration was to be made, in which the original harmony and glory was to be found, in which all that evil was to be destroyed. And that horizon, his sun, he became that bound, the mark, demarcation, between what is in God and what is not in God.

What is of God and what is not of God. What is like God and what is unlike God. God established that horizon in his son.

Everything henceforth of God and for God was to be horizoned by Christ. That we have seen. His son then, being what the horizon is to this hour, was made the measure, the range, the scope, and the limit of God's interest.

And, moreover, his son was made the character, the nature, the constitution of all that which was eventually to be the range of God's eternal presence. Before we go a step further, it might be as well if we indicated something of the significance of that for ourselves. We are all familiar with, aware of, convinced of, there being a rift, a rupture in relationship between heaven and earth.

Between God and the devil. And the two systems and orders they respectively represent. We know that this is not something objective only.

It is all about us. It is everywhere. But we know that it is within ourselves.

The more we know of our own human heart, the more we know that there is an inborn antagonism that only needs to be given sufficient. Perhaps, first of all, in the simple form of its beginning in the Bible, a quest. And from the entertaining of the quest, the development of this whole system of complex antagonism, enmity.

But it is already there in the nature of it. So, Adam, I say we are aware of it. We are aware of it.

Have we recognized sufficiently, have we really grasped other than mentally the great implicates of that for our time? I do not mean for the moment in the world it is there so patent, so obvious, there. So, the futility, the heartbreak, the exhaustion of all in this world apart from Christ to try and harmonize this universe and bring about a state of accord. There is no more desperate and heartbreaking business.

One feels infinitely sorry for the men whose lives are given in that. They are destined and doomed. Every bit of machinery is set up and becomes a contradiction in its very name.

Unite, and so on. But that is not what I am thinking about. Have we really, dear friends, grasped within our very beings the significance, the real meaning of the church, of the body of Christ? For many Christians it is but a teaching in the New Testament.

Very interesting, maybe fascinating. This that we have in the New Testament about the church, about the body of Christ, links right back with that primal rupture in this universe, that division. And this church, the body of Christ, is chosen of God, intended by God to embody His Son in the destruction of death.

Hence immediately you get really, truly, not mentally, not doctrinally, theologically, but truly onto church ground, body ground. You are in the conflict of the ages, beyond any other kind of conflict. This is the conflict.

And the same one who brought about the rift in heaven amongst the angels, and then brought about the same rift on earth between God and man, is set on this thing, as on nothing else, to deny that in Jesus Christ that work is undone, and that mischief is repaired. Hence, whenever the enemy can succeed, succeed. And I think that he succeeds as much by getting people to adopt church truth mentally and then violate it spiritually.

He laughs. He laughs at talent. He laughs at the Christ.

He laughs at the church. He congratulates himself that his original work was not so much in vain. Right there.

Oh, we are involved, and we ought to recognize that when the revelation of the church comes in through the apostle Paul, and is documented in the greatest document that has ever been given to history, you find yourself right there in the conflict with Christ concerning the church. That ought to enlighten us. It ought to set us on our feet.

It ought to be a great warning to us. We are not in a doctrine. Though it be a very great doctrine of teaching and truth, we are in the desperate battle of all the ages.

It is a matter of God having appointed his son to be the horizon within which all that primal, revulsion, rift and rupture is finally to be under. You and I were to abide in Christ. We were not to get out into the natural.

There will be a more glorious testament to the truth of Christ as head and his members as his futile church, child, doctrine, the body of Christ. You say you know all about that? God have mercy upon you. The enemy will play havoc with you if you have not in your heart recognized that that thing which happened in heaven and on earth is here present today as the battleground.

Well, that being the setting of everything we have seen, then there follows that two-fold work of God right through, right through from the beginning. On the one side, God's discipline unto undoing. Whenever God got hold of anyone in line with his ultimate purpose in his son, that started up in that life or in that people.

And I can offer you on that side no happier prospect, dear friends, than this, that if you really do come into line with God's purpose, on one side of your being you are going to be undone and uttered. I will cry, you will come when you will cry, oh wretched man that I am. That's one side.

And the discipline of God must bring that about. The undoing of that in which there is this innate antagonism to the will of God, independence of life and action, contradiction, the absolute oneness and harmony. That's one side.

The other side is, and thank God there is the other side, the reconstituting on the divine basis according to the divine nature. These two things go on in any true Christian life. On the one side, weakening, emptying, undoing, bringing down, making more and more aware of helplessness and impotence.

That, yes. On the other side, Christ becoming more and more the life, the strength, the wisdom, the everything. Horized by Christ.

Now this is foreshadowed, this is all foreshadowed in God's choice of Israel and his dealing with Israel as his chosen people. You must study the Old Testament in the light of Israel from that standpoint to foreshadow how God did discipline, did break, did undo, did bring down, did humble. On the other side, how he sought to bring in that which was according to his own will.

We have referred to some of these men like Abraham and David. We should refer to David again. These two things are so in his case.

Very human, very human with all the weaknesses of the poorest humanity in himself. Yet God could say that that man, the marvel of it is ever, I have found David, a man after my own heart who shall do all my wills. Well you see the two things in his life as an example and representative of the whole nation in God's thought.

On the one side a man broken, a man broken, humble, down, man who even when he is guilty of the saddest and most tragic difficulties, those sounds of penance, those cries from a broken heart. There they are. A terrible sound.

My sin has created me a creature. On the one side, that essential sound, self-empty. On the other side, what a lot of Christ we find in other sounds.

They are just full of Christ. His great prophetic, messianic sound coming out of his own heart. He has entered into the experience of Christ very deeply.

The very words that the Lord Jesus used in his passion came from David first, came through my God. My God, why hast thou forsaken me? There is so much of Christ that comes to us through David after all. And that is just it, breaking to make room for Christ.

Christ is God's horizon. And on the basis of Christ, on the line of Christ, God works in the life of every committed child of his. Every committed child.

He may not be able to do what he wants to in many because they are not committed. In the fullness of the time, God sent forth his Son, the full embodiment of all this history and the full embodiment of all that is to be universal in kind, in nature, in constitution, when God reaches his end. Notice certain very distinct features of the earthly life of Christ.

First is so clear, his life, his life in the Father. Absolute and absolute. From the beginning, from the very beginning, he takes up this undoing work of all that mystery.

It is in his person. In other words, he is in the Father. He is in God and he abides in God.

Another thing that is so clear as you read his life here, is the lifelong and many-sided effort of the adversary to get him out of his place in God. To get him out of that position which he had and get him as the last Adam where he got the first Adam. Out of God's horizon.

Out of God. I say everything is concentrated upon that by the adversary. But the third thing is also very clear.

That is his full victory. By the uttermost, bottommost yielding to the will of God in the cross. The infinite which costs you and I however much we come to understand.

Through years here which cost we shall never know what Calvary meant. But by that infinite cost it is written by the apostle, the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. So often if we have given it any thought at all, we have thought of him doing something objective.

We must remember that whatever there was in the objective realm, it was done in his own nature. It was done in his own heart. It was done in his character.

He destroyed the works of the devil in Adam. He destroyed the works of the devil in heaven. In the right of heart for the will of God.

No divided heart. No divided heart. Because his heart is whole.

His heart is one. And it is kept one through every form of testing, trial, atrocity, temptation. Maintained in oneness to the last breath.

Father into thy hands I commit myself. And done in himself. Now that leads us to the next step in his earthly life.

For a little while on the temptation of the Lord. Yesterday we were occupied with his rebirth and its connection with the primal thing. And then to his baptism with the same connection.

And I say it is very important that you do not just take these as incidents in the life of Christ on the earth. That you relate them all to one supreme thing. So they are related.

And then we come to his temptation in the wilderness. And that these are all of a piece. One thing in their meaning and relationship.

You have to see how closely connected the temptation in the wilderness was with his baptism. With his baptism. These are part and counterpart.

Two sides to one thing. In his baptism coming up out of the water the heaven was opened. And the spirit, the spirit lighted upon him.

And the voice out of heaven said this is my beloved son. The spirit first of all. The anointing, the anointing.

That was the basis and the dynamic upon which from that moment of committal to the will of God in his baptism. He was going to live and fill his worth. Walk and do everything.

In and by the spirit. But what was the significance here of the spirit coming upon him at that moment. Resting upon him.

Taking up his abode in him. Was it not the establishment of this very link with the father. As man.

As the servant of God. The son of man. He has accepted a basis of dependence.

Accepted a law of submission. And the Holy Spirit came and established that link. That union in the son of man with the father.

Spirit formed that union. Created that union. Established that union.

It is a matter of being joined to the father. In the spirit. Not now in his deity as the eternal son.

But now as son of man. In his mission. His work.
For our redemption. The attestation of sonship. Coming upon that.
The spirit forming the link. Establishing the union. And then.
The attestation. My son. My son.
At once. You must throw your eye right back. To that universal rift.
Goes right back. His baptism. And his temptation.
Takes us right back there. The son established and appointed as God's horizon. For the undoing.
And for the doing. In this universe. My son.
The one eternally appointed and designated. To be this sphere of divine activity. Goes right back there.
And it goes right on. Progressively. In time.
And consummately in eternity. It reaches right on. To the ultimate nature and relationship.
With God of the redeemed. Children of God. Sons of God.
By the operation of the Holy Spirit beginning in your birth. Now that's perhaps the most glorious truth. That
ever mortal could know.
That ought to be the most glorious thing. Which you and I know. In Christ.
Sons of God. Through faith in Jesus Christ. With all that is bound up with that.
From eternity to eternity. But dear friends. That is the most terrifying thing to the essence.
That is the most disconcerting thing for the essence. There is nothing. Of which he is more afraid.
And is terrified. Nothing that rouses. Is I. Anymore.
More than that. He sings in that relationship. Nothing that rouses.
Is I. Anymore. More than that. He sings in that relationship.
That relationship. Sealed by the Holy Spirit. With the Father.
Of the Son. And the many sons whom he is going to bring to glory. According.
Which is in fact the final undoing of all his work. At the beginning and through the ages. In that.
It's all undone. Is that. Futility.
Frustration. Is written large. Over all that Satan has done.
Before the world was. In heaven and in earth. After creation.
And has been doing and is doing now. Through the ages. All undone.

If this. If this becomes actually true. That this relationship between the Son of Man and the Father.
Becomes. The relationship between. A whole race.
A redeemed race. And God. On the basis of.
Sonship. Through the camel's pit. No wonder.
There's conflict on this ground. It's good to be able to pinpoint. Put your finger upon.
The meaning of things. And so you come to this temptation. In the wilderness.
It's impressive. It's only Mark. Who really does.
Give us the full force. Of what happened. Matthew.
Luke. Tell us. That Jesus was led.
Of the spirit into the wilderness. Mark. Who is more original.
Than the others as you know. More original. And we believe that Peter had a lot to do with the writing of
the gospel which bears Mark's name.
And. Peter was. Of the most intimate.
Associates with Christ. And this story of the temptation. Could only have come from Christ himself.
No one else was there. And he must have given it there to. Therefore to his most intimate.
Associates. And. Coming like this is the most original.
Of the records. Mark says. Then was Jesus.
Driven. Of the spirit. Driven.
To be tempted. Spirit who had come upon him in anointing. Now girded him.
And. Compelled him. To move.
To the wilderness. To be subjected. To this.
Universal trial. Universal because. It's sonship which is at the heart of it.
If thou be the son. If thou be the son. You see.
What the enemy in those temptations. Were trying to do. Was to.
Thrust a wedge between Christ and his father. To put this last Adam outside. Of God's horizon.
As he'd done the first time. To get Christ. To move.
To act. To proceed. In independence.
Without reference to the father. And without deference to the father. Get him.

To act. Of himself. That's the root of the temptation.

To get him out of God. Out of God. You see.

That is it. And if you don't understand that. Well you haven't much spiritual experience yet.

You will. If you do not understand. That all the activity of the enemy is to get in between us and God.

Is it not? Somehow. Somehow. To get in between us and the Lord.

To thrust the thin edge of the wedging. And then drag it home and kill it. We are.

Away from the Lord. Apart from the Lord. That's what he's doing.

And that's what he tried here in the wilderness. It was this whole matter of abiding in God. Abiding in God.

That was the battleground. Living in God. Living out from God.

And not. Not even using God given powers for personal end. It was a long test.

Long test. Evidently. The Lord.

For forty days. And forty nights. Was going over all that was implied by the step that he had taken.

The vision that he had received. He had committed himself. Committed himself to the will of God.

To be utter for God. He had there seen by the spirit of vision. What that meant.

In the end. He understood the meaning of sonship. Now then.

Now then. The vision was going to be subjected to great testing. And he apparently for this whole period of forty days and forty nights.

Was giving consideration to what was involved. What his step meant. That step of commitment.

It was not until the end of the forty days and the forty nights that the devil came to him. Then Satan came. What's been happening all that time.

Well I can only conclude. He's committed himself to something and this one's facing up. This needs to be understood.

There needs to be a real apprehension of what it means. Dear friends. It's true to the Christian life.

If you take any step of commitment to the Lord. If you are given any vision of the Lord's great purpose. And you commit yourself to it.

It is not long before you are subjected to the most terrible testing on your vision. On your vision. We shall see in another connection how that applied to others.

But here is Christ. Then came the devil. Long drawn out.

Consideration. Contemplation. Weighing up.

And of course abiding by his undertaking. But alone. Alone.
No one else near. No one else near. A sense of consciousness of evil about.
Evil. Perhaps a sense of God being far away. Then come it.
Then come it. And we have these temptations. I'm not going to dwell upon the first.
We know so well. In his hunger and exhaustion. His weakness.
A body. If thou be the son. Among these stones become bread.
That's where it begins. Use your own God given powers. For your own selfish ends.
For your own salvation. For your own good. Christ.
A right thing to do. Christ legitimate. Save your life.
Save your own life. You hear Lord Jesus later saying. He that saveth his life.
Save your life. Why throw your life away? Well ask any truly committed and consecrated servant of God.
Gone out perhaps to distant land.
And laid down their life. And not only that. Anywhere.
If this is the cost. Of the great purpose of God. The undoing of the work of any.
He that saveth his life shall lose it. He that loseth it for my sake shall find it. Save your life.
Most legitimate. Proper thing to do. Question is.
Does the Lord want us to lay down our lives? Not what reason says. Not what men say. Not what the devil says.
But. Does the Father ask us to pour out our lives. To let go our life.
Isn't that the great principle? The basic principle. Of this. Ultimate universe.
Of people. People who let go their life. Who counted not their life dear unto themselves.
Poured out their life. In the will of God. One doesn't argue for any foolhardy presumptuous actions.
But. This must come in the way of our relationship. With the Lord.
Second temptation. It has to be so hurried. And I think dear friends.
The only. Way to rightly and adequately measure the force of the second temptation. Is to read a part of scripture.
Second temptation. Then the devil taketh him. Clinical of the temple.
And says. Thou be the son. Cast thyself down.
And then the subtlety of it all. It is written. He shall give his angels child.

Back up his temptation from the bible. What. Did this mean? I say the only way.

To understand it adequately and rightly is to read something. I'll tell you. I'll read it from the new translation.

I think it makes it a little more vivid. Here it is. Then they led Jesus away.

To the high priest's house. Where the chief priests. Elders and doctors of the law.

Were all assembling. Peter followed him at a distance. Right into the high priest.

And there he'll remain. Sitting among the attendants. Warming himself by the fire.

The chief priests. And the whole council. Tried to find some evidence against Jesus.

To warrant a death sentence. But failed to find it. Many gave false evidence against him.

But their statements did not carry. Some stood up and gave this false evidence against him. We heard him say.

I will throw down this temple. Made with hands. And in three days I will build another.

Not made. But even on this point their evidence did not agree. Then the high priest stood up in his place.

And questioned Jesus. Had you no answer to the charges. That these witnesses bring against you? But he kept silent.

He made no reply. Again the high priest questioned him. Are you the Messiah? The son of the blessed one? Jesus said.

I am. And you will see the son of man. Seated on the right hand of God.

And coming with the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes and said. Need we call further witnesses? Look how the blasphemy.

What is your opinion? Their judgment was unanimous. He was guilty. And should be put.

Some began to spit on him. Blindfolded him. Struck him with their fists.

Crying out. Prophecy. The high priest's men set upon him.

With blows. Meanwhile Peter was still in the courtyard downstairs. One of the high priest's serving maids came by and saw him there warming himself.

She looked into his face and said. You were there too. With this man from Nazareth.

This Jesus. But he denied it. I know nothing.

He said. I do not understand what you mean. Then he went outside into the porch.

And the maid saw him there again. And began to say to the bystander. He is one of them.

And again he did. Again a little later. The bystander said.

Peter. Surely you are one of them. You must be.

You are a Galilean. At this he broke out into curses. With an oath he said.

I do not know this man you speak of. Then the cock crew a second time. Peter remembered how Jesus had said.

Before the cock crows twice. You will disown me three times. And he burst into tears.

When the morning came. The chief priest having made their plan. With the elders and lawyers and all the council.

Put Jesus in chains. Then they led him away and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him.

Are you the king of the Jews? He replied. The words are yours. The chief priest brought many charges against him.

Pilate questioned him again. Have you nothing to say in your defense? You see how many charges they are bringing against you? But to Pilate's astonishment. Jesus made no further reply.

At the festival season. The governor used to release one person. At the people's request.

As it happened. The man known as Barabbas. Was then in custody.

With the rebels who had committed murder in a rising. When the crowd appeared. Asking for the usual favor.

Pilate replied. Do you wish me to release. For you the king of the Jews? For he knew it was out of.

But the chief priest incited the crowd to ask. Him to release Barabbas. Rather than Jesus.

Pilate spoke to them again. Then what shall I do. With the man you call.

King of the Jews. They shouted back. Crucify him.

Why what harm. Has he done. Pilate asked.

They shouted all the louder. Crucify him. Though Pilate.

In his desire to satisfy the mob. Released Barabbas. To them.

And he had Jesus flogged. And handed him over. To be crucified.

Then the soldiers took him inside the courtyard. Called together the whole company. They dressed him in purple.

And having plaited. A crown of thorns placed it. On his head.

Then they began. To salute. Him with.

Hail. King of the Jews. They beat him about the head.

And spat upon him. Then knelt. And paid mock homage.

When they had finished. Their mockery. They stripped him of the cloth.

And dressed him in his own clothes. Then they took him out. We need not go further.

Cast thyself down. And what will happen. You will.

Avoid all that. You will find acceptance. You will become.

The popular figure. Of the time. You will gain a great following.

No cross. You can have it all. Without paying that price.

Did Jesus know what was coming? We have many evidences that he knew. What was coming to him. He knew the bible.

He knew the old testament. Described all this. He knew it.

He knew what was coming his way. Oh. The temptation.

The effort to get in between him and the father's will. For eventually he said. The cup which my father giveth.

The father's will. What does it mean? Well. In the balances.

On the one side. Popular. Acceptance.

On the other side. Complete rejection. On the one side.

A cheap. A cheap. And easy way.

On the other side the most. On the one side. A reputation.

Amongst men. On the other side. Despise.

Despise. On the one side. The temporal.

Position. Status. Acceptance.

And emoluments. On the other side. The loss of all that.

The eternal fullness. On the one side. Himself.

Just by himself. On the other side. The world.

He could save himself. But what about the world? What about the world? That temptation was just for his own personal refusal of it. From the local, on the one side.

To the universal. Compromise. Says the devil.

Compromise for success. Isn't it strange how when anybody refuses the costs, the going on with the Lord in his full way and properties. He chooses the less the devil gives them a lot.

Do you notice that? It on in this world. The other people who have the difficult times. People utter for God.

The devil just gives them. If only, if only you will serve him. Go his way.

For the time being. He'll pay you well. But God help you in eternity.

That was what confronted the Lord Jesus. The third temptation I dare not stay to speak about. I've gone on too long, but mind you he showed him all the kingdoms of this world and said all this will I give thee if thou wilt but worship me.

Oh, it's out now. The cosmic secret is out. That's what he's after.

That's what he's after. What he was after in the great rift to win everything over to himself. To worship him in the place of God.

That's been all the way through. Now it's out. The devil is in desperation.

He's betrayed himself. He's let out. The ultimate secret principle we repeat in every message of the ultimate fullness of God is the principle of self renunciation.

The renunciation of this world. Of this life. Of all self interest and self position for the Lord.

For the Lord. Always have that positive objective for the Lord in the will of God. Go to many a monastery and they'll tell you they're living on the basis of renunciation of the world.

But it's negative. The whole thing is negative. Not for the Lord.

But that's the principle. In the will of God. In the will of God.

No compromise. No letting go of ground. No acting on independent ground standing firm.

By God's help standing firm on the ground of our union in the Holy Spirit with the will of God. That's an abrupt end but you can see far beyond what I've said.

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