

# The Horizon of Christ - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*Christ is the horizon of God, representing the range and scope of God's interests and activities, and his ascension and glorification signify his cosmic victory and redemption.*

**Duration:** 49:33

**Scripture:** Psalm 22:1, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:8, Colossians 1:13, Revelation 5:5-6

**Topics:** "Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of Christ being the horizon of God's interests and activities. They explain that God designated his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the focal point of all his plans and purposes. The speaker emphasizes that through Jesus, believers are redeemed from the authority of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God. They also highlight the significance of Jesus' ascension, stating that it is just as important as his birth, death, and resurrection.

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## Transcript

We are too far advanced now in the matter which the Lord has brought to us for this season. To do anything in the way of review and recapitulation, that would take the whole morning itself. And for the sake of those who join us this morning for the first time, just let me intimate that what we feel the Lord has brought us to take further and fuller account of at this time is that He, the Father God, eternally designated His Son, who is now our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the horizon of all His interests and activities.

The horizon in two senses. The range and scope of those interests and activities and the nature of everything that is of God. He appointed His Son to be that horizon.

The word is found in the original language of the New Testament, although not translated into our language as horizon, yet it is there. Our English word horizon is derived from the Greek word horizon. But apart from the word itself, the Bible is just full of this very matter.

And the New Testament brings it very clearly and very fully and very definitely into view. So, we have been moving within the compass of Christ as God's horizon in measure and in nature. Little praise in its various forms so many times occurring in the New Testament in Christ is our key.

After having spent some time in taking a general and comprehensive view of what this means, we came to the point where that horizon was definitely and in person introduced into this world when God's Son came

forth from God, from Heaven, to take up all this inclusive and comprehensive will and purpose of God. Naturally then, in this time, we have been occupied with the great ethos in the life of the Lord Jesus with their significance. Like the peaks of a mountain range, each one having its own meaning, but each one bringing the next into view.

And all in the range being parts of a whole. When you have gone from peak to peak or seen the whole, you have seen what it means that the Lord Jesus is the horizon of God. In those epochs, in those mountain peaks, we have three remaining for the three gatherings today, if the Lord wills.

This was not planned. I didn't know how it was going to work out when the Lord intimated this to me as the thing for this present time. I didn't plan it, work it out, organize it.

And it is only through the night hours of this past night that it became quite clear to me that it was these last three peaks that were to occupy us today. So it comes quite fresh from fellowship with the Lord. And this morning, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, with which we were occupied so much yesterday, all its marvelous and far-reaching, comprehensive meaning, we come to the next, which is his ascension.

His ascension, perhaps not made so much of as his birth, his death, his resurrection. And yet I want to say at once that it is not a lower peak by any means or in any sense than the others. Indeed, I think we may be climbing all the time when we come to this eminence of his ascension.

We do indeed rise to a great height, spiritually as well as doctrinally and literally. For you will know, those of you who know your Bibles at all, that the ascension of the Lord Jesus is almost invariably joined by his glorification. Two are rarely apart.

Indeed, his ascension itself is sometimes called his glorification, his being glorified. And his being glorified was upon his ascension to the Father. And that link, that union of the two things, gives very rich value to his return to Heaven.

May surprise you to know that there are at least thirty references to his ascension in the Word. Perhaps you think that there ought to be more. Well, you probably will be able to find more than that.

I am saying at least there are thirty references to it, which gives it fairly large place in the Word. It is of course the climax of the cycle of his mission and his work which he undertook. First stage, phase, step, that cycle was his incarnation, moves round steadily, and this is the climax of that great undertaking on the part of the Son of God.

His mission and his work find their glorious issue in his ascension and glorification. Now it is for us this morning to take note of some of the things, only some of the things, which are embodied in his exaltation. To the right hand, the Majesty in the Heavens.

And we can say immediately that inclusively and comprehensively it is the horizon enthroned in the place of complete government for everything. Established above the world and above the Heavens, set there, fixed and given place of all authority in Heaven and in Earth. It is an enthroned horizon.

You have seen the horizon in humiliation, in weakness, in conflict, in suffering, in death, and so on. But now, he as God's horizon is enthroned. To the right hand, put great emphasis upon that word enthroned.

This is a governmental matter. We have said that it is a distinguishing matter, distinguishes between those in Christ and those not in Christ. Words, if any man be in Christ.

There's an if attached to it. It's possible not to be in Christ. Distinguishes.

All we, all we who were baptized into Christ. That's a we. Certain people.

First, not to everybody, it's a distinguishing definition. It is not only a classifying definition, dividing the human race. It is a definition which is descriptive, a kind of people, a kind of realm, a kind of nature which is in Christ.

But then it is a governing definition. This is on the throne of authority and it is under this horizon that everything is going to be dealt with, judged and destined, glorified or doomed. It's on the throne.

Not going to get away from that. Ultimately, the authority is with him, by the Father's appointment, in heaven and in earth. Well that is, of course, the inclusive fact.

The horizon is now enthroned. But within that, there are several other things quite clear. His ascension, his exaltation, his glorification is inclusively victory enthroned.

Victory enthroned. And again, from that high peak, what a range comes into view. The far back look to the original point where the Father made him the horizon.

Going right back there, you see that from the point of his glorification. And you see that which has so much been kept before us in these days. That great rebellion and revolt in heaven which tore God's universe in twain and struck the great discordant note into the harmony of everything, brought in all this terrible history of conflict, of strife, of disharmony.

Because of a revolt which had its repercussions in earth, when man, like the fallen angels, became implicated, consented to it. Then there arose the necessity for undertaking the settlement of that whole thing in one tremendous battle. And that thing itself in its nature and source and universal consequences, even the very purging of the heavens themselves as well as the earth, the answering of that challenge and the settling of that controversy was undertaken by the Son of God in his incarnation.

From the very beginning of his life on this earth, you find him in that realm of conflict between heaven and hell. Heaven is very much in evidence of his birth, but so is hell. So is hell.

The murderer from the beginning is very much on the scene to cut that life short at its beginning if possible. And from that moment onward, that evil thing was continuously active in many different ways to destroy the Son of Man. He undertook that conflict, that battle, that issue, to settle it.

From the standpoint of his glorification, you look right back to that far distant beginning of things. See how the battle was taken up as from the beginning. And this is the issue.

He is on the throne. He is glorified. He has triumphed by his cross.

He is the victim in the universe of God. It is the far back look from the throne. Victory and throne.

It is the far around look. For the whole cosmos as we have just said was involved in this. When we use the word cosmos, it is not just a fancy word.

It is the larger than the earth definition and description. It includes the earth, but it moves out to all that encompasses the earth. Do you and I, the Lord's people who have any spiritual sensitiveness at all, know that our conflict is not only with flesh and blood, it is not only with material things in this world and on this earth, but we are in touch with inimical forces which are in the very atmosphere.

Indeed, that is the realm of our greatest conflict. Sometimes there is nothing naturally or temporally to account for it. It just descends upon you like a sense of evil.

Adversity in spirit. Trial of spirit and mind sometimes comes upon you in your very body. Nothing really to account for this.

Well, you know all that to be very true. That is the cosmic realm and range of this evil work. It is universal in us.

It touches everything. It embraces everything. It is a very remarkable thing this.

I dare to stay just this moment with it. I expect you have noticed, dear friends, that as you move out into this world, if you are really a child of God and really seeking to live your life in Christ, you can move into spheres and realms where you are not known. It isn't that people know who you are and all about you.

You just move in this world and you are conscious that you are a suspected person, that you are a speckled bird. You feel that they do know something about you and yet they don't. And the more you stand to represent the throne of the Lord Jesus, the more you stand to represent this horizon of God, this ultimate verdict in this universe as centered in Christ exalted, the more consequential you are spiritually, the more you will be surrounded and encompassed by a sense of suspicion.

For which there is really no reason as far as you can tell. A sense of suspicion. You are not accepted.

You are doubted. There is something about you. Just that.

And it is a horrible thing, realm to live in, if you don't live in the Lord and abide in the Lord when you are just broken by it or crippled by it, paralyzed by it. Is that true? It is very true. The more spiritual you become, the more you will be isolated by this world and by the forces that govern it.

It's all around us. Just all around us. Everywhere.

But that throne is the enthronement of a cosmic victory in every realm. In the earth and in the lower heavens. He himself triumphed in his presence.

Yes, he said, I have overcome the world. I have overcome the world. And it is written of him that he stripped off principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.

For undoubtedly the cross of the Lord Jesus sees the universe gather together against him. Men and devils. The perfect rage of that cross against him.

In the whole realm of that, range and scope of that, he triumphed and has taken that triumph back. His exaltation means the enthronement of his cosmic victory all around. But from the same high point you can look on.

Back, around and on. And you can see from there how it is going to be universal when God reaches his end through Christ. Complete victory.

And that is not just poetry, vision, language, nothing we keep to the word. You know quite well that the book of the Revelation gives a very large place for that forward vision. The Lamb in the throne and hot things alike.

Absolute and universal victory in that throne. And back to that again later. It is victory in throne.

That wonderful 24th psalm. And the sequence of those psalms is very very impressive. Psalm 22.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Psalm 23. The shepherd's psalm coming into the house of the Lord at the end forever. Psalm 24.

What? Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors. The King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord mighty in battle.

That is the ascension and exaltation. The Lord mighty in battle. Enthronement of victory is his ascension, exaltation, glorification.

Leave that there. In the next place, it is redemption and throne. Redemption and throne.

We saw on Saturday night when we were considering his transfiguration that this glorification, entering into his glory, was an immediate possibility for him on the Mount of Transfiguration. If it had only been himself to be considered, if it had only been his own faithfulness to God, then transfiguration was his, not only for that hour, but forever. But it was not for him alone, and so he turned away from the glory, the open door into the glory, and came down to that mount to work out redemption for man in order that man might be taken up to that mount to be with him there.

Redemption is enthroned. The great final symbolism of our New Testament in this matter speaks of a land in the midst of a throne. A land in the throne.

That's very striking, impressive symbolism. It's almost threadbare that I venture to say it again, that when John wept, no one was found to unloose the seals and open the book. The heavenly messenger said to him, weep not, the lion of the tribe of Judah hath overcome, to undo the seals.

John said, I turn to see. And what he meant was, I turn to see this lion. And when I was turned, behold a lamb.

Well, it's symbolism, but it's very striking symbolism. The lion is the symbol of power, of ascendancy, of authority, of dominion, king of beasts. The lamb, the very symbol of yielded weakness, where we've built much upon that in these days.

Here, that throne is symbolized by a lamb. And we know the history of the lamb in the Bible, always the type of redeeming grace, redeeming blood, what a mighty redemption was accomplished by a lamb. Let's just glance back into Egypt.

See, day after day, week after week, all the power of Egypt, as a mighty world power at that time, being drawn out, drawn out, drawn out. Right up to the ninth, the ninth point of those judgments, it's still holding out. How great is this power to resist, to hold on, to refuse to yield.

All the judgments, all the plagues, from nine times, and still, and still it is unbroken. And the tenth, relenting, relenting, coming to the point where it is well nigh exhausted and broken, what a power this is. And yet, and yet, still, still holding on, even after the tenth, not to let go, if possible to retain something of a hold.

Pharaoh said, go, leave your cattle, leave your little ones, still you see holding on. But what did it? Broke all that power. It was the Passover lamb.

It was the mighty sign of the blood. The lamb did it, exhausted all the resources of this world, drew them out and finally broke them. The last thing was the lamb.

That's where the issue was settled. When the lamb was slain and the blood was sprinkled, that night, the issue was settled. It's a picture in history, a very vivid and impressive picture.

Redemption. The New Testament gives the spiritual interpretation of that history as well as much more Old Testament history. But it's through the Apostle who puts this whole thing into one little phrase or sentence which includes this horizon mark.

And has translated us or transferred us out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Into His horizon, from that horizon. Redeemed from the authority of darkness.

Egypt, Pharaoh, that empire is but a figure and type or a shadow of this greater authority of darkness in which you and I by birth are found to be and all men are. But that throne, that throne and that lamb on the throne speaks of redemption from the authority of darkness. Psalm 68 as you know quoted in Ephesians 4 touches this in a picturesque way.

When He ascended up on high, He led His captivity captive. That belonging to Him which was in captivity. He took out of that captivity and made it His captive.

Well that's where most of us here, if not all of us here today stand and experience. He because He is there in that position has led us as captives of the authority of darkness out of that authority. Redeemed us from that and made us His captives which we are very glad to be.

Very glad to be redeemed from the authority of darkness. Then this other phrase, redeemed from all iniquity. The Lamb has redeemed us from all iniquity.

And most of us when we have seen that word and heard that word and used that word have restricted and confined that word iniquity to a kind, a state of things. That is defilement, uncleanness, sinfulness, evil in nature, in the nature of things and we speak of that as iniquity. Perhaps it's a strong word carrying the matter of sin to its farthest point, iniquity.

But let me remind you dear friends that that word iniquity in the Bible has even a greater context than a state. Of Satan it is said iniquity was found in him. Iniquity was found in him.

What was that iniquity? Just what the word means in its root. Iniquity in the Bible in its root means rebellion against God. That's the ultimate meaning of iniquity.

Iniquity is that. That is sin at its farthest point. Rebellion against God was found in Lucifer.

Iniquity was found in him. And that is iniquity. It's not only the state produced by that but it is the thing itself.

That there is through his interference with man and man's consent to him there is now in the nature and constitution of every being in this creation something inimical and at enmity with God. Many of course won't agree with that because they're not aware of it. They will say oh I'm not against God.

I wouldn't fight against God but we are a company of Christians. And if we know anything at all in this creation something inimical and at enmity with God. Many of course won't agree with that because they're not aware of it.

They will say oh I'm not against God. I wouldn't fight against God but we are a company of Christians. And if we know anything at all about spiritual history it is this.

That we can be so tried, so tested, so up against adversity as to be at least very near the point of raising a question about the justice, about the kindness, about the love, about the fairness, about the faithfulness of God. Perhaps Christians know that better than anybody. Am I saying a terrible thing? Well if that's not true of you don't worry about it.

Those of us who do know something about this tremendous conflict with the evil that has come into our own nature through Adam know quite well that our real battle is to maintain unsullied faith in God under the deepest adversity and suffering. And to raise no question at all about the love of God. Raise no question about His faithfulness.

Raise no question about His promises or His promises. That's the battle realm. There's iniquity in us.

In our nature. Enmity. Rebellion.

It's there. In the seeds. Complicity with Satan in his revolt against the throne.

And has redeemed us from all iniquity. The Lamb has brought us out of that realm. Brought us out of that realm of revolt.

Of rebellion. That kingdom where the rebellion is established. Translated out of the authority of God.

Into the kingdom and listen to the words. Into the kingdom of the son of Israel. From rebellion against God to love for God.

After the kind of His son's love for Him. Redeemed from and redeemed unto and hath redeemed us unto God by His blood. Redeemed unto God.

Man was God. Creation was God's. Made for Him.

Belonged to Him. By eternal right we all belong to God. God's rights are that He should have us as His own.

We went out from God's possession. From God's realm. Became possessed by another master.

Went into His slavery. Into His thralldom. Into His government.

But the Lamb by His blood has redeemed us unto God again. You're not your own. You're bought for the price.

We're the lost. By redeeming blood. Redeeming grace.

I hurry on to the next and near the end of this. Enthroned redemption. Thank God redemption is in the throne.

It's going to come. It's going to come. But then man's perfection is enthroned in the person of the Lord Jesus.

It says of Him that He was made perfect through suffering. I must walk He said today and tomorrow and the third day I must be perfected. I shall be perfected.

Made perfect through suffering. Not only morally, spiritually perfect for the word is a bigger word than that. It means made complete.

Made whole. With nothing lacking. No division.

Absolute. Same word you probably know. This word perfect is used in very simple everyday connections in the gospel.

For instance, little word, descriptive word about the fishermen by the lake. It just says that the fishermen were gone out of their boats and were mending their nets. The word mending there is exactly the same word as perfect.

Making complete. Mending the whole. The thing was torn.

The thing was broken. The thing was not whole. There was something lacking.

And that's the word that is used about what happened to the Lord Jesus and what is going to happen to us. All that is lacking is going to be supplied. All that is broken is going to be mended.

All that is wrong is going to be righted. And it's been done in Him. It's been done in Him.

He is perfected as the representative man of the new creation. And man's perfection is enthroned in His person. Enthroned.

In a throne that can never be shaken. A throne that can never be undone. That perfection is established there in Him.

You know, our glorification in the New Testament is not in the future tense always. Sometimes it is. If we suffer with Him we shall be glorified with Him.

That's future. But you know, when you get into the realm of eternity outside of time, into the heavenly realm outside of the earthly, into the divine realm outside of the human, it's not in the future tense. Whom He justified then He also glorified.

That's past tense. Then He also glorified. Something done.

In the Lord Jesus our glorification is secured and established beyond a doubt and a question if we abide in Christ. It's going to be. Man's perfection is enthroned.

There are one or two features of this. He is enthroned there as without spot. It says who offered himself without spot unto God.

Without spot unto God. That brings of course the priestly and sacrificial features into view. The priest himself had to be blameless.

Had to be blameless. The priest himself had to be an expert in the matter of finding fault if he could in a right way. Don't take that in the wrong way.

But you see, the sacrificial lambs were taken from the flock and they were put aside for some days. For some days. Fourteen days.

During which period the priest had to keep a very close eye upon those lambs. Watch with the most diligent scrutiny day by day to see if there are any signs of any blemish in the lambs for sacrifice. Never did any creatures have a more critical eye upon them than the eye of a faithful priest who had this conscience that what was worthy of God must be flawless and without blemish.

Had such a conscience and consciousness of spotless holiness as being the only thing worthy of God. So the lamb and the priest had to be perfectly one in this. Without spot.

Without blemish. Without blame. The Lord Jesus took both those capacities as you know.

The priest and the sacrifice. He himself had this very very keen sensitiveness and awareness of evil and what was evil. And a deep deep intolerance of it.

And he himself corresponded to his own office. For he as the lamb as well as the priest was without spot and without blemish. He offered himself.

Priest offering sacrifice and offering himself to God without blemish. And he was accepted. And that spotless unblemished sacrifice, sacrificial lamb is in the throne.

That lamb not only had to pass the eye of earthly judges, had to pass the eye of God swift to discern any mark whatsoever of evil. And he passed that scrutiny of heaven. And was accepted.

And this is virtue and the value of that for you and for me. He is still the high priest. He is our high priest.

And he ever lives to make intercession for us. That's good. That's good.

But on what ground does he make intercession for us? He makes his intercession on the ground of his own perfection. He offers his own perfection to God for us. And says to the Father accept me for them.

Cover all their imperfection by my perfection. He intercedes. It's again a pictorial word.

Doesn't make it literal. Think of him somewhere there kneeling down before the Father and actually pray for us. Maybe.

But there is in the presence of God an answer for our sin in a sinless one. There is governing in the throne a mighty perfection and sinlessness for us. Oh thank God for that.

Where should we be today but for that. Any hour of any day where would we be if he were not standing interceding in between God and us with his own perfection. To think of him like this.

There is that perfection and here am I imperfect and there is God. What he is. And I don't come through to God in what I am.

That one stands across the path with his perfection. And when I come into Christ. Into Christ.

I am justified in Christ Jesus. I am righteousness in Christ Jesus. I can satisfy God in Christ.

He is the horizon of my perfection. He is working that out and he will perfect that which concerns us. Make complete what he hath begun.

Well we have already said in the throne man is glorified. He is there as glorified man as the forerunner. Whither the forerunner has gone.

The author of our salvation and appeared on our behalf. He is there as glorified man. May be and truly is there as the glorified son of God.

Glorified with the glory which he had with the father before the world was. But there is the added glory now. The glorified man.

The son of man. The token. The standard.

The representative of all those are found in God's whole righteousness. At last. Horized by Jesus Christ.

Lord make his word precious to us and help us find it.

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