

# The Horizon of Christ - Part 9

by T. Austin-Sparks

---

*The sermon emphasizes the transformative role of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in expanding the horizons of believers and the church's mission.*

**Duration:** 47:40

**Scripture:** Malachi 3:1, Acts 2:3

**Topics:** "Christ"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. He refers to the book of Malachi, which speaks of a messenger of the covenant and the Lord suddenly coming to his temple. The preacher suggests that this prophecy was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. He explains that the Holy Spirit acted as a refiner, purifying the believers and bringing them into a new dimension. The preacher emphasizes that the Holy Spirit broke down barriers of tradition, nationalism, race, geography, and religion, expanding the believers' horizons to embrace the world.

---

## Transcript

Except for what may arise as to our past consideration as we proceed, it is quite out of the question now to go back over all that ground. We just have to move on with the last fragments of this great comprehensive matter as God's Son appointed by the Father to be the horizon of all his interests and activities. We have been seeking to see something of what is within the horizon of Christ.

And in these later times we have been with him on those epoch peaks of his mission and work from his birth onward. Those high points which represent so very much of the horizon of things for the creation. This morning we were with him in his ascension and exaltation and glorification trying to glimpse something of what that means for believers in time and in eternity.

There remain but two of those eminences, those high peaks. We take the next, the first of the remaining two this afternoon which is Pentecost. Undoubtedly an epoch, undoubtedly a very high point in this great movement of God in Christ.

It is the absolute corollary of the resurrection and the exaltation. All that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and all that his exaltation embodied and meant would be wonderful facts and wonderful truths. But apart from Pentecost they would be in heaven and they would be objective to us all quite outside of us.

Matters to contemplate, dwell upon, perhaps with some pleasure and gratification, but still things in themselves and in him. But Pentecost meant and means that all those things true in him and summed up in him in exaltation and glory and all their meaning is brought down here again into this world. Not to be objective but to be subjective, to be inside believers and the church.

What Christ risen and glorified meant by Pentecost was made to become the mighty dynamic of Christian life and the church's mission. When we were thinking about the resurrection those of you who were present will remember how we underlined that feature of his resurrection which was his emancipation, his release, his liberation from all the limitations under which he had labored and groaned and suffered while he was in his pre-resurrection body. All those strictnesses were removed in his resurrection.

He himself was set at liberty for the whole universe. New position, new reign all together. Pentecost or the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the day of Pentecost became the dynamic of that emancipation in the church, the dynamic of enlargement.

The great horizon had expanded in the resurrection. He was cramped and confined before them mainly to Israel and to Israel's land. His resurrection that is no longer true.

The Holy Spirit came to bring believers, to bring the church into that expanded horizon of Christ's universality. The church you will notice was given no option about this matter. We were given no choice in it.

The church became in its personnel individually and in its collective or corporate character expanded by sheer inward force and compulsion. The force as of a mighty rushing wind had the marvelous effect of on the one side causing the grave clothes of those people to fall away just as the grave clothes were removed from Lazarus. And on the other hand they found themselves being by compulsion, by force, propelled, compelled, constrained to move into realms that they had never contemplated and to accept dimensions that had never occurred to them, never been characteristic of them.

It was just something that was at work like a mighty expanding power within them. Working against all their limiting traditions, against their nationalism, against their racialism, against their own geographical limits, against all their religious barriers. They never intended it to be so before.

They were jealous over these things, very jealous over these things and for what was personal in their own interests. But you can see very clearly when the spirit came on the day of Pentecost that the barriers between individuals went down. There were rivalries, even jealousies, trying to outbid and outdo one another even while they were disciples.

There was a competitiveness between them. All that went. No trace of it on the day of Pentecost when the spirit came.

They have forgotten that. They are now parts of a whole, members of one another, dependent upon one another, being supported marvelously by one another. Peter standing up with the eleven.

He'd been a very independent man up to that time, always running ahead of the eleven and thinking he could do better than the eleven. And here he is and here they are with everything that made them merely and only individual. Gone.

They are at large in themselves, beyond themselves. The personal horizon had expanded. And then together we can see the movement.

Jerusalem, yes Jerusalem, and naturally in their own natural souls. Jerusalem might have been the beginning and the end of their horizon. But we see the spirit just forcing them beyond and ever beyond.

And out the horizon into which they have come by this compulsion from heaven has expanded beyond all national, all racial, all geographical, and all religious limitations and barriers. It is embracing the world. Embracing the world.

It took the Holy Spirit to do that. But that is what he did. Lord Jesus had given them a wild commission to all nations, to the whole world.

But even he knew that the commission wicked upon the Holy Spirit to make it a dynamic reality. Commission was not in their hands. It was in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

Now there's a very important thing for us to bear in mind. I have said it affected them individually. But it also affected them in relation to other believers, other disciples of the Lord.

This is a real challenge to us personally. We are too little friends. We are too small.

We are too petty, paltry. Perhaps we know it. Perhaps we are suffering from it.

I know that that's the trouble with us. We are far too limited in ourselves and by ourselves. Limited by our own natures, constitutions, temperaments.

Our makeup, just limited. There's frustration in ourselves. We are apt to view everything and anything that comes our way in the light of how it just affects us, how it affects us personally.

The Holy Spirit has come to make us much bigger people than we are naturally. To expand us to the full dimensions of Christ. To enlarge our capacity.

The only hope for our enlargement is the Holy Spirit. But the sure answer to all our smallness and pettiness is a very real experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He will do it.

I expect this is what the Apostle found when he went to Ephesus and met that group of disciples. Indeed this is what the record, the incident seems to clearly indicate. On arriving and talking to them, seeking fellowship with them in the things of the Spirit with his so large a capacity and so large a knowledge of Christ, he felt that there he was in some kind of straitjacket.

He was pent up. These people were locked up people. Just could not get away with anything very much of the Lord.

Spiritual limitation oppressed him. What's the matter here he would say. I can't speak freely of the things of the Lord Jesus.

They don't seem to know what I'm talking about. They can give me nothing back. It's all one-sided.

I can't breathe here. I'm just pent up. What does it mean? And in his exercise he lighted by spiritual discernment and perception upon the secret of it.

And then straight as a dart he put the question. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Meaning that the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit does not make for a situation like this. And of course he found the mark.

He's darted. Found his target and they said we do not so much as know that the Holy Spirit is or is given. You move don't you? From that point where explaining, interpreting, instructing, and praying with them that this lack should be remedied.

The Spirit came upon them he said. You move from there to your letter to the Ephesians. And you see that in the letter to the Ephesians there's a great deal about the Holy Spirit and his work in the church.

And what you are in there is the biggest, the largest, the greatest thing in God's universe. Christ universally expressed in the complete church. Marvelous reigns that letter.

This is the issue so far as Ephesus is concerned. Of that crisis, that crisis, that day when they came into a very real knowledge that the Holy Spirit had been sent from heaven and been sent to dwell in them. What enlargement of them individually and together by the Spirit.

The church is too small. What is true of the individual is true of the church wherever it may be found in local expression or in the world. It's too small in its spiritual capacity, in its spiritual horizon, and in its spiritual dynamic occupied with itself.

This is what the great enemy of Christ in all his fullness is ever trying to do. Turn inward and narrow down the horizon. Bring into limitation and self-occupation.

Always trying to do that. Every movement from heaven which has in its first effect resulted in an expansion to the full dimensions of the world has sooner or later been assailed by this thing to become something in itself. Crystallized and resolved into something in itself.

Occupied with itself. The Holy Spirit is against anything like that. Here it is.

It's dynamic to counter that and to expand. Dear friends, if we have to resort to expedience to make the church missionary as we call it, or to stimulate missionary interest, we are beginning at the wrong end. Some of us have had a lot of experience in this matter.

We have had some perceptions of the will of God for the world, but in our lack of experience and enlightenment we set up missionary committees and missionary councils and invited missionaries to come try and create and stimulate missionary interest. We did that for years. Very interesting.

A lot of people got very interested and very active, but the fruit of it in actual spiritual enlargement was very little indeed. It didn't produce very much either in missionaries or in real spiritual dynamic. We know that crisis, that deep and drastic crisis through which the Holy Spirit found his way.

From that time, never again necessary to have any missionary committees or councils or to invite people to come and try to make a missionary spirit. The thing happened. It just happened.

It was the vision expanded and the dynamic of a world passion and concern let loose. What had been local and sectarian and all the rest in limitation became spontaneously without effort or organization worldwide and universal in nature and may I say in influence. Now we are beginning at the wrong end when we try to bring this about.

The right end is Pentecost. The right end is the Holy Spirit and then he takes over all the rest. You have to do the following not the leading.

He's ahead all the time as he was in the New Testament days. He was ahead of them all the time. He was calling on while urging on.

There'll be a great deal of wasted energy, wasted time and wasted resources if we begin at the wrong end. There will be no waste if we begin at God's end. The Holy Spirit as the dynamic of the risen and exalted Lord in the church.

Let Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ exalted and Christ glorified come into us and into our churches, our companies in the power of the Holy Spirit. Give the Holy Spirit his own right ground in Christ crucified and glorified and we cannot, we cannot remain in smaller dimensions than the horizon of Christ which is universal. We just cannot.

Now that is a statement of fact but it is also a test of spiritual life. You know what your answer to it is. Perhaps your answer is superstitious.

Heard all that before. We know all that. Perhaps your answer is critical.

Perhaps your answer is disappointment with yourself, questioning whether you know anything about this reality. Your answer may be of many kinds but the answer to all your answers, you must be in wealth and absolutely governed by the Holy Spirit as the spirit of the enthroned and all authoritative Lord Jesus Christ. That is the answer to every kind of limitation.

And dear friends it is a mark of spiritual smallness when our course changes from the expansion to the narrowing and contraction from the full range of the significance of Christ to something smaller and local. That is a loss of spiritual life or it is a mark of there being little spiritual life. We can test that by the New Testament.

The moment we refrain, allow the challenge to come because what I am saying is proved by the word. It is true that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever so is the Holy Spirit. He has not changed in this matter in particular that he is committed.

He is committed as utterly as the Son of God was committed to the Father for his will. The Holy Spirit is as utterly committed to the Christ to make him the horizon of everything and no less a horizon than the horizon of all nations and all people. So much then for the dynamic of enlargement.

The Holy Spirit in coming to the day of Pentecost was and is the dynamic of holiness. The dynamic of a holy life. The individual in the church.

The symbol of the Spirit perhaps more than any other symbol, as great as any other symbol at least, is that of fire. Fire. Baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire.

He is the Spirit of burning. We have, I trust I can say we have seen, we have tried to point out what the cross of the Lord Jesus meant to him in the matter of the divine loathing of sin because of the awfulness of unholiness. The invasion of this universe by an unholy thing.

Christ came to rid this universe of that unholy thing. That unholy power and influence of nature and to do that all of his cross, all of his cross meant to him was involved. Whenever you think or say about the cross,

the death of the Lord Jesus, ever remember that the deepest and uttermost point of that cross is where it deals with evil, with sin.

Now having, having by his cross stood against that evil in this universe and conquered it in his own pattern and being exalted in terms of holiness, of spotlessness to God's right hand, the Holy Spirit came, came to bring that Christ, that Christ into believers and into the church. In those terms, on the one side of the judgment of sin, the judgment of sin, the judgment of evil. Do allow this to be said again.

Open your heart to it. Don't close your heart because you've heard it so often for any other reason. We've all got to bare our breasts to this truth.

I'm not speaking to you as much as anyone else and I speak something that I know of this. Dear friends, if you and I are really indwelt and governed by the Holy Spirit, it is as the spirit of holiness that is there to give us a bad, bad time when we touch evil. When we touch a realm in which the evil one has his control, when we touch something that is not Christ, not Christ, we ought very quickly to recoil by the recoil of the spirit in us and know, know we've touched evil, touched something with which Christ is not in agreement and in that reaction of the Holy Spirit in our sensitive spiritual consciousness, which we all ought to have, we ought, we ought at once to get away to the place of cleansing, putting right of confession, acknowledgement and pleading.

Cleansing only by such a life of the spirit's government within as the spirit of holiness will all the other values of Christ become manifested in us or in the church. He must be present on the one side in terms of the judgment of sin. You remember we have two, we have many, but two to which we can refer instances.

The last book in the Old Testament as the Old Testament closes, as the Old Testament closes, and in closing that door, the door of that dispensation brings the new dispensation into view. Malachi uses words like this, like these, Lord is going to send the messenger of the covenant, the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, but who may abide the day of his coming? For he shall sit as a refiner, and he shall purify the sons of Levi. It is difficult to see how that was fulfilled by the Lord's coming in his birth, but there's no doubt about it that when he came in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that's what happened.

He sat as a refiner. And look at these sons of Levi. There they are in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

Peter, James, and John, and the rest. My word, these sons of Levi are purified. The Holy Spirit takes up these matters of purifying, like the purifying fire.

The sons of Levi, of course, are figurative, typical of the priestly nation. Apart all, the holy nation is called to be, just as the Levites in the Old Testament were chosen as the firstborn to represent the whole nation. That's a symbolic thing.

In the New Testament it means those who are born of Jesus Christ are formed into a priestly nation, the sons of Levi. But this priestly nation, in all its personnel, has to come under this refining work of the Holy Spirit. We'll never get very far without that work.

That work of the refining fire. I like to stay with it because there's so much in the book of the Acts which illustrates this. The other instance, of course, is what we have in the first chapters of the book of the Revelation.

We know the state of the churches for the greater part in Asia. We know the defilements and corruptions that are mentioned there in the churches. And we know that this messenger of the covenant, this Lord, comes to them as it were suddenly.

His eyes are as of a flame of fire, his feet are as varnished brass, and in his hand is a sharp two-edged sword. He's come to refine the sons of Levi because they cannot fulfill their great vocation in the nations with anything that contradicts the holiness, the purity of that one who is their Lord. You notice that the least spiritual church in the New Testament Corinth, being the most carnal, is the most limited in every way.

For appealed and cried, we are not stricken in ourselves, we are in you. We appeal to you, be enlarged, be enlarged. Only they were spiritually enlarged by the Holy Spirit, these divisions would cease, their petty strivings and quarrelings, rivalries among themselves, these divisions, these lawsuits, and all the other things mentioned which are unholy.

There go, if the Spirit really gets his place and changes them from what Paul definitely calls them carnal, are ye not carnal, are ye not carnal, into the spiritual, he that is spiritual, the contrasting condition. What is holiness? We said this morning it is not only a state, holiness is separation unto God, that's what it means. Alternative words are sanctification or separation, they are the same thing as holiness, a complete putting things apart and in their own realm, that belongs to what is outside of God, and must go where it belongs, leave it there, come away from it.

This belongs to what is in God, come over here and abide there. It is separation, the great gap of the cross between what is of the Lord and what is not of the Lord, that is sanctification, that is holiness. I close for the present by pointing out that the Holy Spirit's coming was also the dynamic of the fullness of Christ.

That has been of course implied in all that we have said, but we noted in particular the characteristic of the day of Pentecost is fullness, isn't it? They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and beyond themselves it says they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, fullness in Him exalted and glorified, all fullness dwells, the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. It was the good pleasure of the Father that it should be so. You've heard much and are so familiar with this phrase, the fullness of Christ, but it's a characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is never going to be content with a partial and limited Christ in anybody or anywhere. If he cannot get on with his work of bringing in the fullness of Christ, he'll leave you to it and go somewhere else, and go somewhere else, and do it where he can and with whom he can, as a testimony to a fact in the New Testament. Christ is, we are definitely told, eventually to fill all things, to fill all things, that he is, so says the scripture, to be all and in all.

The Holy Spirit sets to work to make that true in every believer, and in every company of believers, and in the true church worldwide. How did he do it? We referred to the words in Psalm 68, verse 18, and quoted in Ephesians 4, 8, when he ascended up on high, he led his captivity captive, and gave gifts among men. The apostle advances upon the psalmist, and he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, the exalted Lord by the Holy Spirit, providing the church with all the ministries related to the fullness of Christ.

Oh, how we've narrowed down these, these things, apostles and prophets and what not, to church officers. No, the apostle, his function and his anointing is to bring the whole range of the significance of Christ into view. So he's on the move, on the move, worldwide.

He is no merely local figure. His is to keep before the church and the churches and the individuals, the fact that Christ is no little person. Christ is worldwide and universal in his significance.

That's his business. It's everywhere. Seeking to bring into the churches, into believers, and the believers and the churches into the fullness of Christ.

Apostles and prophets, who are ever called upon as prophets, to keep before the Lord's people his own thought about his son. That's the function of a prophet, ever to keep God's thoughts in view. The Old Testament prophets had that as their function, and that is the function of the prophet.

You need not think about these as classes and cults and professions or anything like that. It's function. There must be by the Holy Spirit something working through some people who are keeping God's full thought concerning his son ever in view.

Apostles and prophets, evangelists, it's a large thing that, it's a part of fullness to bring in from the nations into Christ the unsaved by the evangelist. It's a very large thing that, and then pastors and teachers, they go together. That's one title, not two titles.

Pastors and teachers in one function. What is their business? Not just to be all the time trotting around trying to make Christians feel pleased with themselves, or happy with their circumstances. Pastors know she's shepherding and instructing in relation to that into which they are called in Christ.

All these gifts of the exalted Lord by the Holy Spirit are related to bringing the church to the fullness of Christ. And you can test all ministries by that end. Is that what the ministries are leading to? Are people getting an ever, ever enlarging conception of their Lord? And are they being helped to come into that enlargement of Christ? That's the purpose of ministry, and if that is not the result, then there's something lacking as to the Holy Spirit in that ministry.

Well, that's enough. Perhaps more than enough for most of us for the time being. But note then, Holy Spirit came to bring that exalted and glorified Lord into a people on this earth in the terms of His risen enlargement and release, in the terms of His holiness of life by His cross, in the terms of His great universal fullness.

May the Holy Spirit be real in every one of us in all these matters.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1094.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-horizon-of-christ-part-9/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**