

The Incarnation and Life on Earth

by T. Austin-Sparks

T. Austin-Sparks explores the profound significance of Christ's incarnation and earthly life as a model for believers living in the new creation by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Matthew 2:2, Mark 1:24, Acts 16:7, 1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Corinthians 15:47, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 1 John 2:8

Topics: "Living by the Spirit", "The Incarnation of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of Christ's incarnation and earthly life as a representation of the new creation man, highlighting that His thirty-three years were essential to demonstrate how to live a life governed by the Holy Spirit. He challenges the audience to look beyond the superficial aspects of Christ's life and understand the spiritual value and impact of His presence, which stirred both people and spiritual forces. Sparks asserts that just as Christ was constituted by the Spirit for life and anointed for specific work, believers are also called to live on a higher level in their ordinary lives, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The sermon calls for a deeper appreciation of Christ's spiritual value and a commitment to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make a meaningful impact in the world.

Transcript

"The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47).

A Perfect Example of the New Creation Man

Now we want to go on to the further phases of the meaning of Christ. The next is the meaning of His incarnation and life on earth. Here again, the study of the doctrine and of the history, while being very inspiring, ennobling, yet needs the Spirit of God to break in on our hearts to make us realise the tremendous significance of this matter. Simply to say that the incarnation and life on earth was a representation of the new creation man from God's standpoint is, after all, but to make a statement. There is a lot in it. But we have to know that, as it was then, so it is now, a tremendous challenge. The question might be asked - Why did the Christ come by way of birth and babyhood and childhood and youth? If He came to be the Redeemer, the Saviour, and His redemptive work was essentially and solely related to His Cross, or fulfilled in His Cross, why were thirty-three years prior to that necessary? If it is God incarnate, God has been known in the Old Testament again and again to manifest Himself along the line of what are

called 'the Theophanies', that is, visible manifestation to fulfil some immediate purpose, and then, having fulfilled it, withdrawal. Why should not God manifest in the flesh have been like that, if it were only the work of the Cross that was to be done? It is a legitimate question, because much hangs upon the answer. We shall see that those thirty-three years were necessary because God takes up things right from the beginning to represent His thought in a life that is lived through its stages, its vicissitudes, here on this earth, showing what His mind is about the new creation order of man; and before He can bring that in, in any collective or corporate way, He must have worked it out in One Who is a racial First-born, in a life lived here, in this world; worked it out triumphantly and secured it against every opposing force. So He started right there in babyhood.

The Lord does not want us to be too much occupied with the natural side of this always, romancing about the manger and the stable and the inn. He wants us to get behind that. What I mean is this: anybody can talk about the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth and make of it a beautiful story and a great example and that sort of thing, and never be affected so far as an inward change and revolution is concerned; and that is the peril of it. You can see that in its grosser and exaggerated forms in some of the systems of Christendom today. You can go in certain quarters and see the thing set out in shop windows - the baby, the manger, the cattle; and you know that the system that does that sort of thing is one that has no relationship to the inner life of people at all; the two are poles asunder. But not only in that realm, but in our own realm, there is always this peril of visualising, getting a mentality and an objectivity in spiritual things, not knowing that God has something to say right into our hearts by bringing His Son here into this world from infancy onward, and having that life here in a world like this for thirty-three years. He is working out something, showing something, is doing something, and He is doing that in the spiritual realm; and He wants to repeat that in the Church and in the members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The Spiritual Value of Christ

One thing is particularly and jealously guarded by God in the case of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. It is this, that, whatever Christ was it was spiritual; there was nothing from cradle to grave which made Him anything naturally or temporally. It could have been otherwise, and men were looking for it to be otherwise, and were offended that it was not so, "...born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2), a king born in a stable and cradled in a manger, shut out, excluded, not given room! And from cradle to grave, it was like that; nothing, nothing that could be taken hold of naturally and temporally to credit Him with particular value and importance, but everything to the contrary; and God jealously guarded that, would not allow it to be otherwise, kept Him at that level. Why? For this reason and because of this principle which abides, that whatever Christ is in value, it is spiritual. It is the spiritual value of Christ that God has safeguarded, not allowing men and the world to take Him up and say, Here is some great one; look at this and that and the other thing about him! No, you can say nothing like that about Jesus of Nazareth, nothing at all. He is to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to us who believe, Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:23) - but a hidden wisdom, not of this world nor of the rulers of this world. Do realise that, that it is the spiritual value of Christ that God has so jealously safeguarded by the conditions of the incarnation, and of His life while here on this earth, and that is what we want to seek to work out, to recognise.

Christ has become so much other in Christianity, and thereby He has lost His impact, He has been stripped of His dynamic; embellished with an embellishment that God never countenanced. The only embellishment of Christ, if we dare use that word, the only true glorifying, the only true exalting of Christ is that of the spirit, of the heart, and therefore it is only possible for the redeemed, who know that they are

redeemed, to glorify Christ truly. The Lord repudiates all the garlands laid upon Him which are temporal, in this dispensation; He will not have them. What He wants is a spirit that appreciates and values, a heart that goes out in grateful worship. You notice how, through His life, that was always the thing upon which He put His seal. Any recognition of His spiritual value, and a humble brokenness at His feet - ah, there He found what His heart wanted; and when they would cut down branches and hail Him, He had a big reserve in His heart. He knew men; that was not what really satisfied Him. A heart appreciation of Christ is the only true one.

So we have to see the spiritual value of Christ during those thirty-three years, and there is a realm for wonderful unveilings to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. I am not going through it - it would take far too long, for one thing. I am simply declaring facts, principles. But to come to two things about Him which are of abiding meaning, not only in Him personally, but, as John says, "which thing is true in him and in you" (1 John 2:8). [In passing, let us note that that is the right kind of interpretation of the life of the Lord Jesus. It is a spiritual one. John got it very clearly. He will, with the opening of his Gospel, present the Son. "In the beginning was the Word" and so on. But then, when he gets to his Epistle, he starts, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal, which was with the Father...)" That is the life of Christ, the only really valuable one - it is the spiritual revelation of Christ to the heart.]

Constituted by the Spirit for Life

Now, as to these two things about Him which are true in Him and in us, if we are true children of God. One, that He was constituted by the Spirit for life. He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, He was born of the Spirit; the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, was there at birth. You will see what I am after in a moment. We mention the fact that at thirty years of age, the Spirit came upon Him. What is the difference? If He was filled with the Spirit from His birth, if He was born of the Spirit, why should the Spirit come upon Him thirty years later? You have to explain that. To begin with, the answer is this - He was constituted by the Spirit for life, to live His life by the Spirit, "which thing is true in him and in you". We cannot live the life of children of God, much less as sons of God, unless we are constituted to do so by the Holy Spirit. It was for life; and here you are going to have thirty-three years with a mighty climax of what it means to live by the Spirit, and everything in that life for those years is the working out of the Spirit dwelling within. Constituted to live, just to live - that is the point. For thirty years you know very little about Him, and what you do know is that He was not doing specifically and immediately the ultimate thing for which He came. You know that for thirty years He was more or less a private person living a private life, doing the work which many other men did, an ordinary trade, probably looking after a widowed mother, and helping to look after and support a large family, and learning privation and how to make ends meet, so that later He knew the cost of two sparrows in the market, and if you could buy two farthings' worth you would get an extra bird thrown in. How did He know that? He had probably lived it through. But through all that, He was living His life by the Spirit, and God was causing a man to live on the basis of the new creation by constituting him by the indwelling Spirit. Perhaps my way of saying it may be open to correction, but you see what I am after.

And, dear friends, in this new creation in Christ Jesus, we are called to live here, not romantic lives at all, not lives of great public attraction and interest, but ordinary lives - to do our job, learn our lessons, experience adversities, carry responsibilities, do the thousand and one things which belong to the ordinary person's life, but to live on a higher level than the ordinary person; and that cannot be done unless we are constituted to do it by the Holy Spirit. But it can be if we are. And one aspect or one side of the Holy Spirit's

purpose in coming is to enable men and women to live the life of men and women in this world, on this earth, but on another level. Do believe that. So many people think that immediately they become Christians and are interested in the Lord's work, they have to come out of the ordinary realm of daily life and become something special - that the Holy Spirit being within them, of course they must give up their job and go and find some other kind of work for the Lord. Don't you believe it! I do not believe that the Lord does that sort of thing with anybody until He has made them live a life on a higher level in spheres where everybody else has to live. If you cannot do that, give up hope of being sent by the Lord into some other kind of sphere or work. If you try it by direct means or back doors, you will find that the Lord is never got over in that way. We have to be brought back here to live on the new creation level in this old creation world by being so constituted of the Holy Spirit. Is there any impact in that? I am sure there is challenge in it. So face your situation and understand why the Lord holds you in it and does not let you out. You have got to live there by the Holy Spirit before the Lord will make a change. So for thirty years He lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way. He was constituted from birth by the Holy Spirit to live in the realm of the new creation while still moving in the realm of the old. We are constituted from new birth for that very purpose. That is one thing.

Anointed of the Spirit for Specific Work

Then we come to this matter of the anointing at thirty years of age. What is this? Ah, this is a new phase. He was anointed of the Holy Ghost for specific work, for that supreme thing for which He had come and been chosen of God - anointed of God for the remaining three and a half years and all that that meant. I want to get inside of that. You see, the Lord Jesus had a spirit in Him, His own human spirit, and in His case, His human spirit was sinless, and yet it was necessary that the Spirit of God should utterly dominate that human spirit, and hold entire government over it. When it came to working out the great purpose of God - not only living a life, but now working out something very much more serious and grim than that - the great purpose of God - it was necessary that the Spirit of God should utterly dominate Him for this reason - to hold everything unto God, that everything should be out from God, not even out from His own spirit. This whole work of God had to be held very strongly into God so that it was wholly and utterly of God.

You get back into the Old Testament, you have it in type and representation. You know how, again and again, the Spirit of the Lord came upon this one and that one, men represented as being already consecrated to the Lord. In all the typical sense, they were sanctified people. Bezaleel and Aholiab were consecrated men, separated unto the Lord. In the type, they were sanctified men, but the Spirit of God came upon them. You see, even consecrated men are not to be left to themselves, not to have ability in themselves and act out from themselves. Taking Bezaleel and Aholiab as examples - the Spirit of God came upon them. Why? Because there is a Divine pattern to be meticulously followed and carried out, and it is not going to be left even to people who are most devoted to the Lord to do the Lord's work out from themselves. Only the Spirit of God knows what and how and when, and that is very important to God. Not what we, in most earnest devotion, think should be done for the Lord - He does not accept that; not how we, with all the best motive in the world and the heart most real in its desire for the Lord's glory, think it should be done; and not when or where we, though given to the Lord, think or feel it should be. Not a bit of it!

Paul was a very consecrated man, out and out for God. There is no doubt about him, about his true zeal for God. (I am speaking of his post-conversion zeal.) He is a man who knows the Lord, whose spirit has been quickened, and whose spirit is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and yet he will essay to go into Bithynia, and to preach the word in Asia, but the Spirit of Jesus will suffer him not (Acts 16:7). He will be forbidden

of the Holy Ghost to go in the way on which he set out. You see the point.

Now, I am not saying that Jesus and Paul are identical, but I am saying that the Lord Jesus is a representation here on this earth of a man living in this world on the new creation basis and principle. I am not leaving out His Deity. I am talking in the realm of God bringing here an example, a perfect example or representation of a new creation man, and the principles of the life of such. To live that new creation life he must be constituted by the Holy Spirit. To fulfil the work of God, he must be anointed, because everything has to be held to God, held for God, come out from God, and only so can there be the effect and the impact - and it is an impact when the Holy Ghost gets hold of us and moves us in His direction. Was it not so with Paul? He thought to preach the word in Asia, essayed to go into Bithynia and the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not. The Spirit of Jesus took the positive as well as the negative line, and directed him to Philippi. Was there impact at Philippi? All hell felt the impact there, and we know the result of that visit to Philippi, both in the church then and in the product of that church spiritually through all these centuries. That letter to Philippi is the product of the church at Philippi. That little letter touches great ranges. The Anointing is necessary to bring about that kind of thing. It is not only necessary to be born of the Spirit and consecrated to God, but governed by the Lord. The Anointing means that everything in life and service must be held unto God and come out from God. Paul says "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:17-18). All things are 'out from' God.

The Impact of Christ

Now this one further thing. Because the Lord Jesus lived on that basis and principle of a life lived in and by the Spirit, and a work carried out under the government of the Spirit, His earthly life here was a constant registration, both amongst men and in the spiritual realm. If there is one thing patent about His life here on earth, it is this, that, wherever He went something started up, nothing just lay dormant. People and demons were stirred; His presence meant that. The presence of the Lord Jesus in the house of Zacchaeus will cause Zacchaeus to confess his miserable, contemptible sin and wrong-doing.

That results from the Lord's presence. "Today I must abide at thy house". You do not learn of anything else the Lord said to him. The story stops with that, and surely, if the Holy Spirit had meant us to know any more, He would have given more details. But the Holy Spirit has been content to say this; the Lord Jesus went into the house and the man began to feel bad and to say so. That is all. You have numerous instances of that sort of thing amongst people. Religious, self-righteous people, begin to excuse or to justify themselves.

Have you not met such? They immediately begin to tell you what good people they are - they are not feeling comfortable, they have somehow to put up their fortifications, to protect their position. So it was with the religious people of Christ's day, and with the rest. Yes, He did not move amongst them without something happening. And the very demons cried out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).

What is the matter with them? He is there under the Anointing, in the power of the Spirit; something is going to happen, it must happen. And, dear friends, that is just where our need comes - that our lives really do result in something. I am not saying that you and I should pass down the street and everybody should begin to shout and talk. But I do think that it must be true that our having been on this earth has registered something which means that things cannot just remain dormant as they were.

Of course, many of you know this in your own experience as a believer amongst unbelievers. You know, without saying anything to them, how they begin to wriggle, to talk, very often. Praise God if that is so; it is a sign that the Spirit is in you if people are up against you - if you do not ask for it. If you are living there quietly and beautifully by the Spirit of the Lord, and things become ugly around you, be encouraged, that is how it should be. If you are a child of God and no one feels it, there is something wrong.

The enemy knows where Christ is. I need not say more along that line. Here is the meaning of Christ's life on the earth - it was to show what a life in the new creation is like, and what its effect is, how it is first constituted and then governed by the Spirit. And, by all the teaching of the New Testament, this is intended to be true of us, true of the Church and of believers. O God, make it more true! That must be our prayer. This is where we must have our response, our reaction.

It is not enough merely to accept the tale of the life of Jesus, the story of His birth and of His going about doing good: but what is the effect of this in the realm of things spiritual? What is the abiding value, as far as you and I are concerned, and the Lord's people? It must touch a realm beyond this earthly, and stir to the depths the realm of evil spiritual intelligences. His life was a mighty challenge in every realm, because the Spirit of God was upon Him.

I have not touched in detail that large realm of His life where the Anointing governed His movements. That is quite patent - that He did not move on the ground of His personal devotion to the Father. He moved by intimation and direction of the Spirit of God. You can see why the Church has lost its impact. It is because it has concluded that, once you have consecrated your life to the Lord, you can do anything you like - arrange for the Lord, plan, scheme, do all sorts of things for the Lord. The Church has been doing that for a long time, it is doing it now. Their argument is that it is for the Lord. How far is it getting? What is the comparative value of it? I leave you to answer that. It was not like that at the beginning, in the case of the Lord Jesus, in the first days of the Church when the Spirit, by the Anointing, really did govern. In a very short time, far, far more was achieved than was done in a very, very long time afterwards. No, we are consecrated to the Lord, but we have to have the Lord's direction for every movement, and not conclude that, because we are out for the Lord, we must just do all we can. Let us get it from the Lord, and only so will it be effective. It is not easy, perhaps, or it does not seem easy, but it is something to which the Lord calls us, and it is the way back to effectiveness. At any rate, let us put it like this - there is going to be nothing unless it is under the Anointing, and the Anointing means full charge of all life and all activity. Here is the place for repentance - repentance that there has been so much of ourselves and so little of the Lord. Here is the place for submission, that He shall be Lord in the power and reality of the Anointing. The Lord grant it!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-incarnation-and-life-on-earth/>

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