

The Persistent Purpose of God - Part 10

by T. Austin-Sparks

T. Austin-Sparks explores the persistent purpose of God through the vision of the house, emphasizing the importance of Christ as the standard for measurement in the church and daily life.

Duration: 40:44

Scripture: Ezekiel 40:3-4, Ezekiel 43:10, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 2:9

Topics: "Purpose Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the instructions given to the Prophet in the book of Ezekiel. The Prophet is told to behold with his eyes, hear with his ears, and set his heart upon all that he is shown. The speaker emphasizes the importance of paying attention to every detail and not neglecting the small things. The Prophet is instructed to declare all that he sees to the house of Israel, highlighting the need for clear understanding before presenting anything to others.

Transcript

Yesterday morning we took a general view of this house which was shown to you. This morning we shall begin to consider it more in detail. We are going to return to chapter forty.

At verse three. And he brought me thither and behold there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass with a line of flax in his hand and a measuring reed and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, son of man, behold with thine eye and hear with thine ears and set thy heart upon all that I shall show thee for to the intent that I may show thee, show them unto thee art thou brought hither.

And the man declared all that thou seest to the house of Israel. So we take another look at this man of brass. You will remember that we noticed that the feet of the cherubim were of brass.

And the feet of the Lord Jesus in the first chapter of the revelation were of brass. And we said that brass in the bible is a symbol of righteous judgement. This man of brass stands at the gate.

And that means that there is no way in for the unrighteous man. The man of the flesh cannot enter this gate. There is no place for the flesh in this house.

It is only the righteous man who may come in here. And everything is going to be measured by the righteous man. We take a look at these two instruments of measurement.

And we note that there are two instruments of measurement. There is firstly the line of flesh. And no measurement is given to it.

We are not told how long that line was. But we do know that it was used for the greater measurement. When we come later to the river in chapter 47.

It is not the rod but the line that is the instrument of measurement. And we find that that river becomes too deep for man. I think this clearly corresponds to what Paul said in the letter to the Ephesians.

We are here in the presence of something that is far greater than human measurement. If this man does represent the Holy Spirit, as we said, there is no measuring the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is without measure.

But within that great fullness, there is the law of measurement. There is that which brings the great fullness down to particular measure. So we have this measuring reed.

These are two ways of measuring. One is what we may call the measureless measure. The measure that has no limit.

That is the great fullness of the Spirit. The other is that which is brought down to things in everyday life. This rod was used for all the details of the house.

Now I do not think it necessary to stay with that. We only know that there are two means of measuring. One, there is the great fullness of Christ.

The other is that that fullness is brought down to the details of the house of God. I will just leave that with you because there is a lot in there. We must remember this.

That when we think of the fullness of the Spirit or the fullness of Christ, we must not forget that that is going to be brought down to the details of our life. That is made perfectly clear in the letters of the Ephesians. The first three chapters relate to the great fullness of Christ.

That unmeasured fullness. Chapter four begins in this way. I beseech you to walk wordily of the calling wherewith you are called.

And then all the details are mentioned. Husbands and wives. Wives and husbands.

Masters and servants, servants and masters. Children and parents, parents and children. You see the measuring rod has come down to everyday life.

We must not think in the great terms without realizing that the Lord is going to apply his measure to every detail. It is so easy to have these great ideas about the fullness of Christ and to neglect the details. Every little thing must be measured by the same Spirit as measures the fullness of Christ.

I hope you see that. Here is this man. Let him represent the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is speaking about the vast fullness of Christ on his house. The vast fullness of the life which flows out. But that same Holy Spirit comes to these very small details.

It is the same Spirit. And while he speaks of the greatness he also points to the details. I do not think that there will be any value in our looking at the measurements of the rod.

So we just pass on to the instructions that were given to the prophet. Notice in verse 4. The man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes and hear with thine ears and set thy heart upon all that I shall show thee. For to the intent that I may show them unto thee art thou brought hither.

Notice these words. Behold. Hear.

Set thy heart. Declare. Then if you go over to chapter 43 and verse 10 you have another part of the instructions.

Show the house to the house of Israel. Now let us think about that for a minute. Before we can present anything to other people we ourselves must first know what we are going to present.

The instructions to the prophet were very particular. Behold with thine eyes. Hear with thine ears.

And so on. Take very careful attention. Give very careful attention to this whole matter.

You must have a very clearly defined apprehension of what you are going to show to the people. You yourself must see this object. We ask again what is that object? What is the answer to this whole vision? In the first place undoubtedly the answer is found in the incarnation.

The incarnation is the key to everything here. First of all in the incarnation we have the righteous man. The man according to God.

And he is the standard and the measure of everything. He is made unto us righteousness from God. You will remember that that was said at a time when things were out of order in the church.

Things were not according to the Lord's mind. And so the apostle said about Jesus, he is made unto us righteousness. Everything in the church has got to be measured according to Christ.

That is according to God's standard as presented in his Son. He is the righteous one. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness in the man whom he has appointed.

Jesus said that the Father had given him authority to execute judgment because he was the Son of Man. Here is the man of wrath. The son of man who is the righteous one.

And he is God's standard of measurement. God measures everything by him. We shall have to come back to that again later on.

But we just note the meaning of the man of wrath and his measuring reed. You will remember that the natural man had intruded into the church at Corinth. The apostle had to speak to Corinth much about the natural man and the carnal man.

He pointed out that this natural man, this carnal man had no place in the realm of the things of the spirit. This man received not the things of the spirit, neither can he know them. That is what this man of wrath is doing.

He is saying that only the man according to Christ can behold and see and hear. Only the spiritual man can come into this realm of the things of the spirit. I said that the natural and carnal man had intruded into the church at Corinth.

And you see the method by which the apostle sought to put that right. He said I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He said I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Paul brought in this righteous man to correct the things that were unrighteous. By bringing in the righteous man he put out the unrighteous man. By bringing in the man of the spirit he put out the man of the flesh.

That is exactly the meaning of this man of wrath with his measuring rod. So that first of all the object in view is Christ. He is governing everything.

And then of course going with that is the church which is his body. The church is called the one new man. Paul said you have put on the new man.

And so the church is measured according to Christ. Christ is the measure of everything in the church. Indeed that is the only church that is known in heaven.

The only church that heaven recognizes is that church which is the body of Christ. That church which is measured according to Christ. Everything in that church has to do with one thing only.

It is the measure of Christ. That is of course what we have in Colossians and Ephesians. And we may say in Philipians also.

But Colossians and Ephesians are particularly the letters concerning the church. In those letters measurement is mentioned. The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The length and the breadth and the height and the depth. You see measurement is not there. It is there very much.

But this is in the church. And everything with the spirit is just a matter of how much of Christ there is. Let us try to get free of our technical ideas of the church.

We know that the church is not a thing. It is not an institution. It is not here or there as to geography.

The church is just where it is as the measure of Christ. If there is more of the measure of Christ in one place than another then there is more of the church there. It is just the measure of Christ that determines how much the church is there.

You try to remember that. It is spiritual measure which is the measure of Christ that defines the church. If you ask the question what is the church and where is the church? The answer is where Christ is.

And where Christ is most fully there is the church more fully. We must recognize that the church is entirely measured according to this man. But that church can only be seen by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

If we have not received the spirit of wisdom and revelation then we may talk about the church. But we shall just see the church in some way that is not the spirit's way of seeing the church. It requires the Holy Spirit to enable us really to see the church.

And when the Holy Spirit shows us the church what shall we see? And when the Holy Spirit shows us the church what shall we see? Shall we see something that is called the church? Shall we see a lot of people who hold a certain doctrine about the church? Shall we see something in which a certain interpretation of

Bible teaching about the church is held? Shall we see a congregation of people who call themselves the church? Shall we see any of that? No, when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes we shall not see that. There is a great heavenly system. Christ is the embodiment of that heavenly and spiritual system.

It is all a matter of what Christ is. It is a matter of the mind of Christ. That is what Christ thinks and how he views things.

It is exactly how Christ does things. You see the church is an expression of a very comprehensive person. That is how we should consider the life of Christ.

As here to reveal these great spiritual truths of heaven. It is a vast heavenly system brought to us in the person of God's Son. It was when Paul saw Christ that he began to see the church.

Those two things went together. And the more he saw of Christ the more he understood the church. That resulted in Paul giving us this unique presentation of the church.

It is only Paul who calls the church the body of Christ. I have often said if we understood the whole of the human body and after many centuries of studying it there is no one in the world this human body is still capable of developing things that the wisest physician does not understand. With all their knowledge and all their wisdom they are still trying to understand the human body.

If we understood everything about our physical body we should understand Christ and the church. Because the church is the body of Christ. I am saying that this can only be seen from a heavenly standpoint.

By revelation of the Holy Spirit. So we come to these instructions. Son of man behold with thine eyes and hear with thine ears and set thy heart upon all that I shall show thee.

What does that mean in New Testament terms? Well in the letter to the Ephesians the apostle prays that the church may come to the full knowledge of him. There it is as you know in the original the full knowledge of him. The Ephesian believers had a knowledge of the Lord.

I think they had a very large knowledge of the Lord. Paul had been with them for two years. And he said that he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God.

So that they had received very much teaching from Paul. And yet in the end he is praying for them that they might be brought to the full knowledge of Christ. And he explained that in his own prayer.

That you may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of his inheritance in the saints and what the exceeding greatness of his power. That you may know Son of man behold with thine eyes and hear with thine ears and set thy heart upon all that I will show you. So Paul says that I may know him.

Right at the end of his life he is still saying that I may know him. Son of man behold with thine eyes and hear with thine ears and set thy heart upon all that I will show you. Too easy to show the house to the house of Israel.

So that this new ministry to which he was called was a presenting or revealing of Christ. We can put it in this way. In the first vision Ezekiel had seen the man on the throne.

He had seen the man in heaven. And now his last grace was the man in the church. He was seeing the church now.

And his ministry at the end related to that. The presenting of the fullness of Christ. And the church which is the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

So the end of that prayer of Paul is unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages forever and ever. Son of man show the house to the house of Israel. What will be the effect of that? This is the test as to whether we have seen.

You see we can talk about the church as we have seen. We have it in the New Testament. There was a time when I was doing Bible teaching.

And in those days I could give a very good analysis and outline of the letter to the Ephesians. It was what was in the New Testament about the church. And I could present it in that form on the blackboard.

But in those days I was in a denominational church. I was wearing the clothes of a denominational minister. I was talking about the church but I knew nothing about it.

I had really not seen the church. All my knowledge of what the Bible taught made no difference to me. What was the result of that? There was very little spiritual value in ministry.

All that ministry certainly did not create a revolution. Now notice what it says here. Show the house to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed of their ways.

And may keep my words. The effect of the ministry. If it is to have effect like that we must have seen it in the Spirit.

It will not have that effect if we have only seen it in the letter. The letter tells us that the Spirit makes it alive. The effect of a ministry of revelation is quite positive.

It has an effect upon people. Now I had hoped that this morning I would get a little further than that. But if I start at this point I shall want to go right on for an hour.

I wanted to come to that little picture. But we seem never to get there. But I will not start and spoil it by having to stop too soon.

It is not that it would take so long but it is a very important matter. So I think we will just stop there for this morning. No doubt you will be glad of the little extra time to be quiet.

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