

The Place and Meaning of Jesus Christ in Human History - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of Jesus Christ in human history, highlighting the contrast between the first Adam's self-will and disobedience and the last Adam's obedience to God's will.

Duration: 47:26

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Corinthians 15:47, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 4:9-10

Topics: "Human History"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of Jesus Christ over evil forces and sin. He recounts the story of a man possessed by demons whom Jesus was able to free and restore to his right mind. The preacher highlights the distress and harassment caused by sin and evil habits, emphasizing the need for Jesus' intervention. He also discusses the greatness of Jesus as the last Adam, who came to overcome the consequences of the first Adam's disobedience and demonstrate his power over natural forces. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the immense background against which Jesus' greatness is revealed.

Transcript

With the words of 1 Corinthians 15, 45 and 47 before us, we now turn to the other side of this whole matter of the place and meaning of Jesus Christ as the second man, the last Adam. We have taken a lot of time, not enough to cover all the ground, but a lot of time to see, to review the necessity, the divine necessity for a second man, a last Adam. And out of that consideration, of God's demonstrating to all the generations of history, the terrible entails of one basic and inclusive choice or decision in the wrong use of a great trust, that of free will, demonstrating how deep, terrible a thing it is to move out of the will of God into self-will.

I say, God having taken all time and used all history to demonstrate to the world, to the universe, what a terrible thing that is. Since we have built a little upon that side of history, and that interpretation of history, we are led to this one quite clear conclusion, that God, when he does anything, has very good reason for doing it, whatever it is. God never acts on any flimsy and unsubstantial ground.

In this matter, God has given us this terrible, terrible story, which is not all told yet, to let us know that when he did act in answer to Adam's rebellion and disobedience, he acted with a full, full knowledge of

what was involved in that act. And he has shown by history, and is showing by history, what he knew to be involved in a single act of disobedience. As one, as Paul puts it, by one man's disobedience, and by one act of disobedience, what a story.

But there is another thing to which all this brings us. When God sent his son into the world, as the second man, the last Adam, there is an unspeakably great thing bound up with that. Thus, we have just passed through a season of a vast amount of sentimentality, prettiness, a good deal of childishness.

It's all right. But, dear friends, in the coming into this world of God's son, no less and no smaller thing was involved than the total overwhelming of this end tale of the first Adam's one act of disobedience. And some of you may have wondered why we took all that time on that sorry and sordid story, that dark side of history.

Perhaps you saw little point in it. Certainly you felt little comfort in it. But you know you can never understand or recognize the greatness of Christ unless you see the immensity of the background against which he stands.

And that is not our conclusion. And that is not the conclusion of this platform. That is what God has done.

He has in effect said, do you want to know how great my son is? Then I'll show you by at least ten thousand years of history that he has got to clear up. And if you can fathom that, if you can comprehend that, then you'll get near to the appreciation of how great he and his work really are. That is why our object is not to tell the miserable story of human failure.

That is only a means to an end. Our object is to present the greatness of Jesus Christ. We turn over now to this other side of the second man, the last Adam, coming into humanity to supplant, dispose, depose the first, the original.

We have seen that certain words describe or certain phrases describe the state into which the first man, the first Adam, brought the race. The utter, utter loss of human peace, strivings for peace, everything that man can conceive of to bring about a reign of peace. The older the world becomes, and the longer the shadow of human life, so less the peace, less the peace, less peace in human life today than any time in human history.

Man has been striving and is striving with all his resource, which is not small, as we have seen, for rest, for rest, relief from tensions and stresses, find leisure. And the longer history draws out, so the more dissatisfied, discontented and restless man is. Man has striven for security.

Today human race is shot through with fear, born of a sense of insecurity. And the defeat of every effort to bring about a state of security. Man has striven for ascendancy, for victory, and today more than ever in his history is conscious of the defeat of all his efforts.

Indeed, only within these past few days, question has arisen out of this sense of frustration, inability to cope with the world situation, to whether after all the United Nations organization is worth retaining. Man has striven and is striving for liberty, and his greatest inventions are his prison. So it is.

What about the second man, the last Adam? Are these not the very words that come in with him? Are they not? Yes, of a different kind, it's true. Of a quality, and of a nature, and in a realm that is altogether different, that's what it's meant to be. Nevertheless, peace I leave with you.

My peace I give unto you. Not as the world did it, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And when you said that, hadn't you gone right back behind the first man, the original Adam, who broke that peace with God? You've gone right back behind and undercut all that Adam number one let in.

I say it's of a different kind and a different realm, it's in the heart. But isn't that the place to have it? What you can stand up to, what you can stand up to in the world, if you've got the peace of God in your heart. And how much can you stand up to if you haven't peace? Jesus said, I'll give you rest.

I'll give you rest. We know what that means. No, it is not what the world seems.

Release from responsibility, escape from labour, from work. But there is a rest that remaineth for the children of God, into which we are brought in Christ Jesus. A rest, which can be rest in labour and even in conflict, which is something spiritual, inward.

What about security? The apostle, this apostle, gives us a long catalogue of the things which to the world speak insecurity, life, death, things present, things to come, height, death, principality, peril and all the rest. And finding his stock exhausted, he has to lump all the rest together in this or any other creation. And I'm persuaded that none of these things will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Is that not security? Life can be a formidable thing. And death can be a formidable thing. And all these other things may be very disconcerting things.

But, says the apostle, the whole lot put together and anything else you like to mention and add cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Is that not security? And so you could go on with all that comes in with the last Adam that he is. But what a difference.

What a difference. You see, with him, that thing of which we have said much, which dogs every effort of man to realize his destiny. For man was made to have dominion, that said it, but he was made to have it in relation to God.

And he decided to have it without that relation. He lost it. And history is one long, long story of man's effort to get it without God.

And there's running alongside of every one effort of man a dogging thing. But he takes a step forward and something comes up either to make him take two steps backward or to frustrate the full realization of his effort. Just that.

Just like that. So that his most advanced step, as we are seeing it today, has running alongside of it the most terrible, which takes the very heart out of it and makes it all this great advance. After all, a very doubtful thing.

A very doubtful thing. It would be better if we never found that out. If we never discovered that.

It would be better. All right. But that's what is meant by the curse which dogs man's steps and runs alongside till the end.

The end is what we can so clearly visualize now. A wonderful, wonderful development ending in the most gas. But for the intervention of another, where would this world end? Well, we know.

The curse is taken hold of like the sting in the tail and is plucked out by the last atom. The curse is taken. And that element, that element of neutralization is destroyed in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

He undercuts all the nature and history produced by the defection of the first atom. Now, notice, how does he do this? How does he do this? What is the strength of this? The law of this? The secret of this that he does? For he does it. There's no doubt about that.

Wait a moment. Well, he does it by reversing, completely reversing and contradicting the way that the first atom took which led to all this disaster. What was the motive, the motive by which the first atom acted and opened the door to this history? The motive was my will.

My will. The motive of the last atom, not my will. Does that sound very simple, the way of putting it? Doesn't take many words, but there's an infinitude of meaning in that.

The law and the watchword of the last atom was from the coming, from the inception to the last breath, not my will, but thine. And on that basis, see whether he as man, representative man, is great. See the greatness, his greatness.

A greatness, you see, that man today at his most just covets with all his might. His greatness in the physical realm comes into this world, into this physical consequence of the first atom's act and finds this state of physical defeat, sickness, infirmity, terrible physical state. Physicians, be patient with me.

Spend your whole life, lifetime, and they have, generations, spent all their strength and all their energies, thank God for them, what they've done to help in order to do what he did in a moment, in a moment for the world. And a lifelong disease yielded in an instant. All the entails of sin in the physical body was cancelled out with a word from his lips.

Don't you doctors wish you had that greatness since the last atom? And men strive and struggle to get the mastery of the natural forces, the forces of nature. And they think they've got a long way in doing that. And then something happens, some disruption, some disturbance in the heavenly bodies, some terrific storm, hurricane, something in the realm of nature, and man is rendered utterly impotent and helpless for being just run away with mighty threatening storm, wind and sea.

And under that word from his mouth, the whole thing subsides, the whole thing subsides. Be still. And there was a great calm, natural forces yielding to him how great he is.

Men, weary, torn, distracted, bewildered by evil forces. Read of one woman of whom he cast seven demons. Men, just tortured by evil powers.

And others trying to tame them, put the poor fellow in chains. Tame him that he would pluck the chains off. No one says he could tame him.

Evil forces, evil forces. And with a word, with a word, out they go. The poor victim sits, closed in his right mind.

And what shall we say about sin? By the grip of evil habits, that awful thing, sin, soul distress, soul distress. They're not called righteous, but here they are, plenty of them, about him. The distressed, the harassed, mustered by evil and an evil nature.

And with a word, son, thy sins be forgiven. It's not only a word, something happens, something happens. He goes away forgiven.

And deliver social, family disruptions, factions, if you like, broken homes. There's something about that. And all the efforts of social institutions, and they do, and they do.

And he comes into the scene. There's reconciliation, and there's men-made relationships. How great he is, this last Adam.

Without any of the organization, the institution, the paraphernalia, the efforts, the expenditure, he's great enough, with a word, to just undercut the whole entanglement of the first Adam. He's great. And one of the greatest things, I think, that the last Adam recovers and restores, is that vital factor of a sense of purpose in life, in being.

You think of that, that goes to the heart of a great deal. A well-known psychiatrist and psychologist has put it on record that one-third of all the people that go to consult him are plagued and distraught by the malady of having no sense of purpose in life. Frustrated.

That's the great word. Frustrated. It's only another way of saying it.

No purpose for living. And what a door that opens, doesn't it? How much rushes in through that door if only you're robbed of a sense of purpose in life, being at all. And do you not see that this is a growing malady today? It's spreading, it's spreading like a disease everywhere.

Men are asking, what is the purpose of it all? What is the purpose of it all? What's the meaning of life? The last sense of a great purpose in having a being. I repeat, that it's just there, which is a root thing in human life and history. It's just there that the last Adam comes in.

I have often put it like this, suffered this repetition, that when a person really comes in surrender to God in Jesus Christ and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their own savior, the very first thing in their consciousness is, I have something to live for. I have something to live for. And I didn't have before.

They may not be able to explain what that is. They could not tell you now what this great purpose is. But there has been born, born like a new child, born within their consciousness.

Life was meant for something. I have a being for something. There's a purpose for which to live.

That grows if there's a normal spiritual growth and becomes stronger and deeper and becomes clarified. You know, the last Adam brings that. There was a great purpose, but in relation to God.

And it was lost when that relationship was broken. He recovers. He recovers and gives the sense of purpose.

Now I must hasten to this. Earlier I said that amongst those things which every person who takes life seriously, which means especially every Christian, there are several things that that person wants to know and must know and seeks to know. And I said amongst those things was the meaning of spiritual experience.

The meaning of spiritual experience. Well dear friends, if you can read your own spiritual experience. Can you not read these parallel columns? On the one side the Holy Spirit has got hold of you and is making

you know what you are in yourself, in old Adam.

No one like a true Christian knows what old Adam really is. Does that sound terrible? Yes, but that's just it. That's just it.

Because a true Christian is one who is going to really, really appreciate the grace of God. And you never appreciate the grace of God unless you see the necessity for it. So that along one line, spiritual history of a Christian along one line is the discovery and the growing discovery of our own utter worthlessness.

I was going to use another word. Is it too strong a word to say? Our rottenness. You feel you are a very respectable, nice person.

Forgive me. I don't want to insult you, but I don't think that's too strong a word. The deep tragedy of this old Adam is unfathomable.

And it's got to be shown. In order that really God's Son may be understood and appreciated must be set over against that background. But, thank God, spiritual history runs along another line.

And it is all too slow, I grant you. All too slow. Nevertheless, by the grace of God, by the work of the Holy Spirit, the inculcation of the life and nature of the second man, the last Adam.

We learn to boast about. We can boast about. Indeed, indeed, we will never say anything about our attainment in that matter.

But God only knows where we would be but for Jesus Christ. So I have to look at things. Where would I be today if it hadn't been for Jesus Christ? Knowing now what I know that I did not know of your, the depths of this nature and the awful possibilities that are in it.

But the Holy Spirit has got hold of a Christian life, a truly committed Christian, and is working, is working into that life through this disposition, this disposition of the last Adam. And what is that disposition? I may be your battlefield. It really may be your battlefield.

Thank God. Thank God for the measure of victory. But is it not here? Nevertheless, not my will.

Isn't that it? Are we not more and more being brought by the Spirit of Jesus Christ to that place where this will of ours becomes subject to the will of God? Where we are discovering the need for, and thank God, being more and more enabled to accept absolute dependence upon God for everything. Where all that resource in ourselves, that self-resource is being undercut and removed, and our resource is found to be in God, truly in God, but only in God. And we are put onto a very wonderful basis.

Oh dear friends, if you are a truly born again child of God, you are put onto a marvelous basis. I have spoken of this last Adam's greatness. What is the word that sums all that up? Supernatural.

Supernatural. That's not natural. Oh yes, we don't need to say that.

Supernatural. Do you not realize that your very new birth is a supernatural thing? That's the truth, isn't it? Do you not recognize that your continuance and endurance is a supernatural thing? If you don't, well, I don't know what's the matter with you, but we are put into those positions where for endurance, endurance going on, where no possible hope or ground or way but God himself to carry us on. And that's supernatural history.

It is. It's supernatural history. That's not natural.

That's not natural. Some of you may not know what I'm talking about, but some of you do. So you see, what was true of him, in a spiritual way mark you, in a spiritual way, is being made true in us.

I say again, all too slowly, all too meager, and yet it's happening. We are put onto a supernatural basis. I believe that there's very much larger need for us to prove this, to know this.

I might carry this into the body of Christ, the church, whatever it may be represented in local companies. You know, the supernatural elements ought to be far more in evidence. I believe that a great deal of our physical troubles ought to yield to prayer.

And of our family disturbances and upheavals ought to yield to prayer. And these other things, they ought to yield. Supernatural, they ought to yield.

We are brought into much of this in Christ, to be known now, what a helpless, weak thing the church is. Ought it to be like that? With the last Adam, resident within, with all this meaning? Well, dear friends, that's where I'm going to leave things for the present. You will find that quite enough, I'm sure.

But there it is, here is this second man, this last body, this last Adam, who has come in on the one side, on the one side to expose the old, to condemn the old, and to put away the old by his cross. In which the whole of that old Adam was crucified. And on the other side, to bring in, to introduce, to establish, to constitute, to build up, to propagate and extend.

A race, a race of men and women, who are partaking of his own potentialities, who are given his own gifts, spiritually and morally, who are learning by his working and by his grace. In the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, that after all, there is a dominion for which God meant man, and that that dominion, that ascendancy, that victory, is found in Christ. In real measure, now, at the end, the end, is that race of which he is the first, and the last, reigning, glorified, the complete reversal of all the others.

When you read at the end, we heard yesterday, no more, no more pain, tears, death, no more. But everything to the contrary, you see the triumph of the second man, the last man, and that is what remains when all the other is no more.

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