

The Man in the Glory

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of the Man in the Glory and His role in governing the spiritual life of believers through the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Ezekiel 1:26, Ezekiel 9:2, Ezekiel 40:3, Ezekiel 43:6

Topics: "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the 'Man in the Glory,' illustrating how the Spirit of God governs and transforms believers to reflect Christ's image. He draws parallels between the visions in Ezekiel and the Acts of the Apostles, highlighting the spiritual authority of Christ as the exalted Man at God's right hand. Sparks explains that the Holy Spirit's work is to conform believers to the likeness of Christ, marking those who are burdened for God's purposes. He stresses that spiritual growth involves both divine judgment and the empowering presence of the Spirit, leading to a glorious Church. Ultimately, the sermon reassures that despite challenges, the Spirit is actively working to fulfill God's redemptive plan through the Church.

Transcript

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." Ezek. 1:26.

"And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar." Ezek. 9:2.

"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." Ezek. 40:3.

"And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, and by the dead bodies of their kings in their high places" Ezek. 43:6-7.

"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." Acts 2:33.

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:55-56.

"I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven." 2 Cor. 12:2.

In our previous meditation we began to see something of what the book which goes by the title of "The Acts" brought in - that is, a new day, a new age, with an entirely new character: a day which, because of the advent of the Holy Spirit and His absolute Sovereignty in the realm of Divine things, is an age-day which is fundamentally and essentially spiritual in its nature and character. We began to see something of the content of that; and our occupation is with the deeper and fuller meaning of Pentecost.

The Spirit in the Books of Ezekiel and The Acts

Turning back to the prophecies of Ezekiel, no one who has read them needs to be told what a very large place the Spirit of the Lord has in them. A glance at your concordance will at once show you how large that place is. You see that the Spirit is constantly mentioned all the way through - the activities of the Spirit in sovereignty in all kinds of connections with Divine thoughts; and by that alone there surely is a basic link with the book of The Acts, for the same connection is registered by a glance at that book with the one word in mind, the Spirit; it is all the Spirit in the manifold activities of the exalted Lord, His continuation of doing and speaking. So we can say that there is a very close relationship between these two portions of the Scripture as part and counterpart; and it is in connection with some of the features of that that we are to be occupied now.

In our previous meditation we dwelt upon one point amongst others - seeing how the book of The Acts takes up comprehensively the Old Testament and gives it a new spiritual reproduction, interpretation, application, and in some ways reverses the order of the Old Testament. Here we have a grand example of that in the case of what is in the prophecies of Ezekiel. Amongst those things which we saw previously was this - the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the deep, hovering over the chaos, and then active as the Divine Agent of reclamation, redemption, resurrection, to bring in a new creation. The object of it all in the natural was seen to be man; it reached its climax in the man that was in God's thought. Carried over to the New Testament, we saw that when the Spirit of God came into action in this sovereign way, redemptively, re-creationally, it was all with a Man in view, the Man who is said to be the life-giving Spirit, the last Adam. "First... that which is natural; then that which is spiritual." "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45,46). The Man is in view.

The Moral and Spiritual Government of the Man in the Glory

Now let us recall the above passages with which we began. In Ezekiel, each of those which we read brought a man into view. There is no difficulty in interpreting the first of them. "Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne... and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." Then we went over into the Acts. "Being... by (marg. at) the right hand of God exalted..." "I see... the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

A Man is in view. The correspondence between these passages is evident and in both cases the meaning is the same. You go back to the opening chapters of Ezekiel from which the above words are taken and you find all the Divine intentions and thoughts are being projected, the counsels and purposes of God are in view - the wheels and the living ones and the spirit in the wheels: Divine counsels, the purposes of God in motion - and they are all under the government of this One Who is upon the Throne.

All these Divine movements in relation to Divine intentions concerning a people for God are all under the government of that One upon the Throne; and they go straightforward, they turn not as they go; they are not deviating, they are not hindered; they go and they go straightforward because there is One Who is in the place of absolute sovereignty, and nothing, however it may seem otherwise, can really divert His purposes. So in this book of The Acts; whatever happens which seems to be a diversion or a subverting or a hindrance or a contradiction, and however much it seems to be out of the straight way, is found in the end to be compelled, by a governing hand, really to reach God's end and fulfil it, and not hinder it.

He is going straight forward. It is because of the Man in the glory. Yes, He is God's Son, very God, but that is not the line of our thought at the moment. It is the Man - "I see the Son of man..." As the Man He is the full embodiment of the perfection of God's thoughts concerning man that is ultimately to be, man that is eventually to occupy God's realm, and as Son of man He is installed, enthroned, established as the perfect model of how things are to be; and God is taking the straight course in the power of the Spirit to that end - to have things according to the Man in the glory.

And that Man in the glory is not just officially, but morally and spiritually, governing everything to that end. If He were acting officially, of course, none of these contrary things would be allowed, no one would be able to raise a hand; but He is acting spiritually, and morally in His authority. I mean by that that you and I are not brought to God's end simply by those sovereign acts of the Lord in heaven which save us from all kinds of difficulties. Something has to be done in us, and therefore it must be spiritual and moral government that operates to conform us to the image of God's Son; so that, although there may seem to be hindrances and obstructions and difficulties - and there are - nevertheless, His spiritual government is producing spiritual ends in us which mean approximation to His own likeness.

So it is by the Spirit that He governs, and not just as official, sovereign Lord. It is most important to recognize that it is a spiritual government, for it means that everything is spiritual. Ascendancy and triumph and arrival are going to be spiritual, not just natural - we shall not simply be brought there apart from anything that is accomplished in us. We are moving towards God's end by spiritual government within our lives, not merely by a sovereign hand upon us. I think that is quite clear, but it is necessary to say it as we go on.

Now, the point of this first presentation of the Man, both in Ezekiel and in Acts, is that the governing reality is One Who already embodies God's thoughts in perfection, and all government is in relation to Him. He, as God's perfect realisation, sits in the place of absolute authority and holds everything into the ends which God has purposed. There has to be, by the Holy Spirit, something of that accomplished in us if we are going to reach this Divine end.

"A Man in Christ"

I have taken up a fragment of autobiography from Paul because it is going to serve us greatly by way of illustration. "I know a man in Christ." Now, we believe that Paul was an elect vessel; in a very special way he was chosen of God for a special purpose; and when we look to see what that special purpose is - that

is, what singles him out and distinguishes him even from the other Apostles - we are compelled to come down to one thing, that to Paul was committed a revelation of the one new man in Christ: "the church which is His body": the collective, the corporate, man. Then we see also that not only was that revelation and that ministry or stewardship committed to Paul in a specific way, but that it was passed right through his very history. It was something that was caused to go through him, right through his very being, and his whole life was brought by the Spirit of God on to the basis of that revelation and dealt with accordingly; so that Paul, in a unique way, became a representation for the age on earth of this thought of God - a man, the one new man, a man in Christ. He calls himself that - a man in Christ. That helps us to come back to Ezekiel and take these other three particular references to the Man.

The Man with the Inkhorn

We have seen the standard, the model, the representation, the inclusive One. We have seen that that is set to govern all the activities of God in a spiritual way. Now, break that up. The next presentation of a man is that of a man clothed in linen with an inkhorn by his side; and what is he doing? The One in the glory - for so we may speak: although it does not say this actually, this is the conclusion - the One in the glory is taking account of the state of things here, and especially amongst the Lord's people, those who bear His Name; and the state of things is said to be very, very much other than according to that Man. There is very little that indicates the Man in the glory here; that is, there is very little of the Lord's thought in any fulness that can be discerned. But the man with the inkhorn, clothed in linen - and we must not stop with all the details - is taking a note of everybody; he is singling out, he is listening, he is looking at faces, he is watching, he is looking inside of hearts, and whenever he finds a man who sighs and who groans because of the state of things, he puts a mark on him; such a one is a marked man before heaven. The man with the inkhorn is a Man from heaven, a Man here with the Divine thoughts, and where He finds a real heart exercise, a heart sorrow and burden, a sighing and a groaning because God has not got what He ought to have - all things according to Christ - He marks that as something of account.

"I know a man in Christ." Listen! "I... fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). That is in the spirit of what we are saying - a man with a great burden of concern and travail because God's thoughts are not found expressed amongst God's people, that is, Christ is not being reproduced in the spirit of His heavenly Manhood. This man in Christ on another occasion said, "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19). This is a man sighing and groaning because there is such a coming short of that Divine thought in the people of God. Such an attitude results from a work of the Spirit of God, and the implication is this, that Pentecost in its outworking - or the presence of the Holy Spirit here - will mean that those in whom the Spirit operates and has His way will never be able to rest short of God's full thought for themselves or for others. They will be deeply exercised and burdened and will be drawn into the travail of Christ, to fill up that which is lacking of His sufferings for His Body's sake which is the Church. This man in Christ is a marked man, he is marked from heaven as one whose whole heart is taken up with this great concern that what is there should be found here: that what is true of Christ, the Man in the glory, should be more fully expressed here in this new man, the Church, the Body. That is an operation of the Holy Spirit; and if you tell me that the Holy Spirit is having His way, and yet there is complacency with things that are not according to Christ, I say that is a contradiction; it cannot be. If you are perfectly satisfied with things as they are in yourself or in other believers, and have no real concern that there should be a full conformity to the image of Christ and that the whole Body should be brought to the measure of the stature of a man in Christ, the Spirit of God is not doing His work in you. Pentecost in its deeper meaning will produce that.

The very fact that so soon after His advent the Church moved out as by Divine urge to seek the members of the Body and then to bring them into full conformity is proof positive that the Spirit of God is seeking to perfect a Body, a manhood, according to that Man Who has been revealed as in the glory. The man with the inkhorn signifies that - that the Spirit of God produces a heavenly concern and takes note of where that concern is.

The Man with the Measuring Reed

The next chapter, chapter 40, brings in the man with the measuring reed, and his appearance is as that of brass. He is in type but the expression of Christ, God's full measure, coming here to show where things come short, and to indicate where this is lacking and that is needed, and what the Lord wants as to His exact measure of Christ. It is what Peter called Judgment beginning at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17), for brass typifies judgment. Paul also was very exercised about measurements. You know what he says about them; measurements as to the House, the Church, the Body; the length and breadth and height and depth; the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. All that he wrote and said on the numerous matters of the life of the Lord's people we must interpret in the light of this, that it is a matter of the degree in which there is a coming short of Christ. The Lord is very greatly concerned about spiritual measure, although His people are not so concerned; and this man is really Christ, the Man in fulness, coming down to be like a measuring rod beside His Church, and to say, This is where you are not true, and you must adjust; this is where you have excesses, and they must go; this is where you have deficiencies, and they must be made good. It is the Spirit of God at work all the time to see to it that in all details we are according to Christ, the Spirit of God working in relation to that perfect measure that is in heaven, the measure for this Body, for this collective man, in all its parts.

And then how detailed is this man with the measuring reed! He takes the prophet in and out and round about and up and down and through, and is measuring all the time. He measures the gate, the porch, the threshold, the court, every chamber; everything is measured. He says, in effect, that God has His thought for every part, the details matter to Him, and the Spirit has come to check us up on all matters of detail which relate to God's purpose in calling us in Christ. A man in Christ who is governed by the Spirit of Christ will not be lax and careless about anything, even the smallest things. But, while this may sound difficult, a high standard that could bring us into a good deal of burden, bondage and legalism, let us remember that the Spirit of God has come to accomplish this very thing - not only to judge but to do what is needful. That is the other side of Paul's great ministry; not only the pointing out of what comes short or what is in excess, but to say, The Spirit can make it all good - He is here to do that. That is why in Paul's letters to Corinth (particularly the first), where so much had to be indicated as disorderly, as not according to Christ, the Holy Spirit has such a large place. Yes, He is here, not just as the judge, but as the helper of our infirmities, to correct the wrong, to bring about conformity to Christ.

The Place of His Glory

Then in Chapter 43 there is the man speaking out from the place of the glory, saying "Son of man, this is the place of my throne where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever." Paul, the man in Christ, uses words which explain that when he says, "Unto him... be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (Eph. 2:21), and, coupled with that, "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). You can see the Divine thought.

What is the place of glory where God will dwell? It is no place on this earth as geographically located or materially constructed. It is a spiritual sanctuary, a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is something which has been spiritually constructed, constituted and perfected, and His dwelling and His habitation will be there, and it will be the place of His glory unto all ages for ever and ever. What is it? In other words it is the realisation in a people of that conformity to the image of His Son.

God, by His Spirit, is working to make us a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, for His own habitation. "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ...and I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:2-3); "...the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10- 11).

This is none other than the corporate man in Christ perfected and glorified. That is a vision of Christ and what Christ means in the thought and intention of God. It is a revelation of that for which the Spirit has come, and an explanation of what the Holy Spirit is doing to get rid of all in us which cannot be glorified. Having brought life and incorruption to light by the Gospel, He is working unto that day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory, when the Church is a glorious Church where God Himself is found without restraint and in which He is worshipped in His universe.

The Man in the glory, being at God's right hand exalted, established, settled, is the assured realisation of God's end. He cannot be there without His members. He cannot go on there alone. All the meaning of the presence there of Christ, the Son of man, would be stripped from Him if His Church never came there, made like unto Him; there would be no meaning in it at all. He is, after all, but the Firstborn among many brethren; He is bringing many sons to glory. The Spirit of sonship has come, not to try and do something, not with a hope that it may be; He has come in all the sovereignty of that One there, and it is going to be.

Settle your faith in this. However many questions you may have as to yourself, however often you may despair in yourself and be on the point of giving everything up - and who that knows his own heart does not know the frequent temptation to do this? - yet there is no need for despair. There is another view, there is something else going on. The Spirit has come, He is within. He sees One at the right hand of God, and in spite of our despair about ourselves, in spite of the discouragement and impossibility that we find in ourselves, the Spirit of God is holding us to the Man in the glory, and going on with His work; and it is not until we abandon faith in the omnipotence of the Spirit of God that hope departs and despair settles down.

While we will believe that the Spirit of Christ has come in all that omnipotence of the exalted Son of man, and is in us to do the work, hope springs eternal, there need be no despair. He is working in sovereignty.

I do believe that this book of The Acts, as it opens, says so loudly and clearly this one thing - that out from heaven the Spirit of Almighty God has come in sovereignty to see things through. Let Herod do what he likes, let the kings and the nations have their confederacies, let all conditions work adversely, let Satan and all his forces operate, the Church goes on and these very things are drawn right into the train of Christ's triumph and made to serve the Divine ends. The things which befall work out for the furtherance of the Gospel, and the very things which look like disasters and calamities prove, at long last, to be complementary things under the sovereignty of the risen Lord. The Spirit of God is in charge. Oh, that our faith may settle there and deliver us from our despair! There is a Man in the glory; the Spirit of God has

come and has entered into us with just one object - to make all things abound toward the reproducing of that Man in us, in measure individually, and in the collective measure of the individuals in one glorified Body, Christ corporate. What possibilities! What a prospect! May the Lord give us a new vision of His beloved Son and a new heart confidence and assurance that He Who hath begun a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

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