

The Place and Meaning of Jesus Christ in Human History - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

Jesus Christ is the explanation of human history, spiritual experience, Christianity, and the church, and he is the second man, the last Adam, who has come to supplant and displace the first Adam.

Duration: 1:07:39

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:19, 1 Corinthians 15

Topics: "Human History"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and highlights the central theme of Christ in Paul's preaching. The speaker also discusses the significance of understanding history and the forces that shape the world. They suggest that God allows humanity to make choices, which ultimately lead to the consequences of sin. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the New Testament's purpose of explaining Jesus Christ and encourages readers to consider what each passage says about him.

Transcript

Will you please open your New Testament, add the first letter to the Corinthians, first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, the first verse. Now, I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preach unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved. I make known, I say, in what words I preached it unto you.

With these words, the greatest apostle that Jesus Christ ever had draws his mantle together over his shoulders and sets himself to gather up everything that he has been saying into a climax and a consummation. We can almost hear him breathe a sigh of relief that he has got through all the unpleasant business that was imposed upon him in the writing of this letter and having got through it, he says, now, I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preach unto you. He had been compelled to write about a whole lot of unpleasant and difficult matters.

He was at the time in Ephesus about to conclude a very wonderful time of ministry there. And his fellow laborer, Apollos, had arrived, told him the state of things, Corinth, and sent three other people, probably slaves, of the household of Chloe in Corinth had also arrived, and they had poured out a very deplorable story of things in the church in Corinth. Sad story of divisions and schisms, quarrels and disorders, moral

evil, social wrongs, of spiritual immaturity, of Christian unkindness, one to another, and so on.

It's all here. By either Apollos or these others, they had sent a letter to Paul asking him to answer a number of questions on a lot of matters about which they were troubled. And as you know, this letter is his answer to that whole situation and all those aspects of it.

A laborious thing. You can't read it without feeling how the apostle was laboring with this situation as well. He might be troubled, heartbroken, deeply moved.

He passed on from point to point, covering the whole. And then with what is the end of chapter 14 in the dividing up of men of this long letter into 16 pieces, he finishes that. And I think, as I have said, gladly finishes that.

He might very gladly finish that as far as the job is concerned. And he, in effect, says, having dealt with all that, I'm not prepared just to leave it there. Let me take you back, brethren, right to the beginning of your life and history as a company of the people of God and remind you of that basis upon which you came to be.

A church and a company of God's people. What I preached unto you and you then believed and upon which you stand. That is, you have your very existence and by which you are saved.

Having written all the rest with a sick heart, he concludes that he must preach the gospel, he calls it, which he had preached and which was the ground of their existence. Now, while all the conditions at current, all of them, may not obtain today in many churches, thank God, there are some things that passes and are at least the abiding peril of companies, of God's people. In any case, there's something that comes out of this final resolve of the apostle, which is of inestimable value to the church and the churches in all ages.

We are not glad that the Corinthians were what they were, were like that, but here is the wonderful sovereignty of God that he takes hold of a most deplorable situation and makes it the means of drawing out some of the most sublime things in divine revelation. And who would be without what we call the fifteenth chapter of the first letter of the book? Who would be without it? Thank God for his power to use the darkest background to bring forward the most glorious revelation. Well, you notice that this chapter or this section is a summary and is a consummate restatement and a climax.

Paul uses this word preach you see several times. Verse 1, verse 11, verse 12, verse 14. A thing preached.

A thing preached. So you look to see what was the heart and the essence of that preaching. What you've only got to underline one word, Christ.

You find yourselves right at the beginning in the presence of a mention of Christ no fewer than thirteen times I say at the beginning showing what the foundation really is. What the preaching really is. Now into this consummate restatement the apostle gathers a revelation which is well nigh unparalleled in Holy Scripture for, if I may make this parenthesis you read through this long chapter you are amazed and you hold your breath and you say where did the apostle get that? Where did he get that? How did he come by that? Things that he's telling you here about glory and the differences in glory and the resurrection body and what it will be like and so on.

You see this is something that no man ever concocted this never arose in a man's brain something here of unparalleled revelation into a designation of Christ. He gathers all this wonderful unveiling and unfolding.

It is summed up by him in a title a double title verse forty five It is written the first man Adam became a living soul the last Adam a life giving spirit forty seven the first man is of the earth healthy the second man is of heaven there's your title or designation second man the last Adam and in itself dear friends that double title of the Lord Jesus is a summary of human history from the beginning and in the immediate context it is a summary of human history on both sides that of the first Adam the human history of tragedy the last Adam the story of human history in recovery and glory Christ Jesus the second man the last Adam always be correct in how you put it even such a scholar as John Henry Newman has slipped up on it as we've just sung and you sang it so glibly no he's not a

second Adam it's a last Adam maybe a second man but it's a last Adam finality is reached in Christ in human history now in the first place that is an explanation of Jesus and it is quite right to say dear friends that the whole of the New Testament is a combined operation to declare and explain Jesus Christ do get hold of that the whole of the New Testament is a combined operation to declare and explain Jesus Christ and it should never be used in part or as a whole for any other purpose because it has been used for all sorts of things for all sorts of things for everybody who has some particular bee in their bonnet will put something in the New Testament to support their view because it has been used for so many things it has lost its mighty authority the New Testament may be used for one

thing and one thing alone and that is to explain Jesus Christ explain why ever there was a Jesus Christ why ever Jesus Christ came into this world why he lived taught and walked why he died why he rose again and why he is in heaven the New Testament I say is all gathered into the business of explaining Jesus Christ one question should always govern our reading in part or in whole whenever or wherever we read in this book that question should be what has this to say about Jesus Christ what light does this throw upon him either by direct statement or by right and true implication or inference what does it say about him now these these words in verses forty five and forty seven are a very important instance of this very thing the explanation of Jesus Christ how is he explained by these words

the second man the last Adam dear friends it does not require profound scholarship or great intellectual ability to see that such a title such a double designation puts the one referred to into a position of unique relationship to the whole human race a second implies a first a last implies an original and by the two everything in human life and history is encompassed you cannot get before the first there is no such thing as before the first in anything anywhere and you certainly cannot get behind the last nothing beyond the last and so here we have human history for that is the subject encompassed by this but what does it imply clearly the conclusion is that two different humanities stem from two different racial heads one humanity stems from the first man Adam another and quite another

and that's the theme of the New Testament stems from the second man the last two distinct lines two distinct kinds but Mark again in this very connection the teaching of scripture is that the second man the last Adam stepped into humanity in order to supplant and displace the first and the original to set aside all the damage which the first had brought into humanity by his sin by his wrongdoing the second and the last was a necessity because of the utter breakdown of the first and the original Paul has, as you know a corresponding paragraph on this very thing in his letter to the Romans chapter 5 verse 12 from verse 12 to verse 21 he dwells upon this as by one man sin entered and death through sin as by one man's sin so by one man's righteousness a good strong section on the function of

the two racial heads you can read it but there in that chapter Paul in referring to the first Adam says Adam was a type of him that was to come but all, all too briefly so all too briefly so Adam's typological position was just this in his being the first and the progenitor of a kind and I think that's where it ended before his fall he was the first of a race he was the progenitor of a race and in that sense he was a type of him that was to come maybe other features at that time but that is the significance of Adam being a type there was a gap you see in his history the gap of probation and test he was placed and then there was to be in the intention of God all that he was meant for made for but between the placing and the fulfillment there was this gap of probation when he was put on

test all the immense potentialities which were crammed into that gap that probation that is what we are going to see I trust today the immense potentialities that were there in the balances in the balances of that gap that probation what tremendous things hung upon one thing one thing and that one thing how he would use the great trust of free will the great trust of free will on the one side all that God meant intended and hoped for in the creation of man demanded that man should be a free agent not compelled not forced not just a piece of machinery going without its own volition desire or thought you would never be satisfied with anybody giving you anything on those terms so they couldn't help themselves they've got to do it you've got it because they had no volition you would only be

satisfied if by the choice of their own heart and reason and desire they gave it to you so God made this great trust gave him the at the same time trust and responsibility of free will everything was in the balances of how he would use that there was a law governing a law governing not the law of compulsion at all but it was the law of dependence upon God just dependence upon God whether he would use that trust of free will in dependence upon God or whether he would use it in independence what delicious things unspeakably great things were bound up with that probation that test that question all heaven might have been holding its breath at that time we know we know we know all too well what happened I say we know all too well before I am through God helping me you will see what is

involved for us well we know the story how he used that trust how he broke that line of dependence upon God he severed that link and took his trust into his own hand to realize all his potentialities out of relation to God in independence upon God and because of that and all the entail the terrible terrible entail of that a second man our last Adam became necessary if the world was to be saved and humanity was to be saved now look at some of the essential facts of this last this final Adam this second man in order to really undo all that which we have not yet touched upon but in order to undo all that entail he himself must be the negation of the violated law if the law was everything everything by dependence upon God and that law was broken and Adam said everything without dependence

upon God for that was the issue and the option that law was broken the redeemer must himself be the embodiment of that law absolute dependence upon God and nothing else nothing else to it nothing to help in himself humanly in the world anywhere of any kind nothing god of life to the last very last grand man breath the first of a new type you tell me that that's the Adam race not a bit of it not a bit of it not as you know yourself as I know myself not like that is it this is another order of being that is like that and will go that way even unto death and the most ignominious death whereby deliberate choice he refuses any kind cause he is a committed man to the will of God he then as such a last one such a second one is the progenitor of a race which is to be like himself in this very

respect a race of people who on this very principle of his life will be constituted the principle of everything to the last fraction by dependence upon God oh brethren doesn't that in itself open up the first letter to the

correct read from the beginning again and see these come in read from the beginning again and see these come in and all their self-sufficiency self-strength self-ignoring glorying in worldly wisdom what not that's an aspect of the whole we must leave for the moment I just mention it to let in light on this why Paul preached Christ and said when I came to you I determined to know nothing amongst you save Jesus Christ and him crucified what does that mean what does that mean it does not mean crucifixion to all that independence of God which came in through the first all

that taking into his own hands all that seeking for himself drawing to himself that acquisitiveness that possessiveness that assertiveness that pride that is characteristic of all who have come from that but none of it in him and as the first the second in this new movement of God he must reproduce must reproduce after his own kind must reproduce after his own kind now that dear friends after all is only introductory I hope I'm not wearying you that is very important that we get our foundation well laid that brings us right to our present point there are some things that every seriously minded person will be concerned with sooner or later everybody will be seriously minded about life sooner or later but Christians are particularly supposed to be seriously minded people who are really

concerned about this matter of life and there are four things that comprise that concern one is the meaning of human history the meaning of human history have you ever really sat down with your bible to seek from it the explanation of human history the second is the meaning of Christianity the third the meaning of spiritual experience and the fourth the meaning of the Christian church and the meaning of all those four things is gathered into one person Jesus Christ and he as the second man, the last Adam as such he explains human history as such he explains spiritual experience as such he explains Christianity and as such he explains the church now then I don't propose to try and cover all that ground so fear not but I'm I'm tremendously concerned dear friends I'm burdened, this is no

mere subject that I'm interested in occupying if you are a seriously minded person this really does concern you and are you not are we not being forced being forced in our time to have a serious question about human history what's the meaning what's the meaning of it all the human race mankind and all the history of mankind what does it all mean you know we are being headed right up to that question today leave that for the moment as a Christian are you not increasingly confronted with the question as to the meaning the meaning of Christianity the meaning of Christianity after all what is this thing what does it mean as we view it in general or in particular what does it mean further if those are too objective are we not being forced more and more to face the question of the meaning of

spiritual experience is there not in our heart a recurrent question why why are we doing the way we are doing why is God taking us this way and through this why is this being allowed and that why to the children of God is all this if that is not a really pressing question in your heart I'm not giving very much for your spiritual life or anybody who is really alive to ultimate things is very concerned about this what does our spiritual experience in the hands of God really mean what does it mean what is God after what is God explaining what is he doing now on the one side then on the one side human history on its one side we must see that God has taken all time now I'm not going to say how long that is human history at least embraces 10,000 years well let's leave it at that let's leave it

at that if that's all that's all we know God God has taken all time to demonstrate to demonstrate the meaning and the results of the wrong use that man made of his trust of free will when he took that into his own hands and it became self will instead of God's will shall I repeat God has taken all time to demonstrate the meaning and the results of that act it's here that we come to a point which is very full of

the most important instruction what was God left to do you say you say why when man did that when man did that broke that law of dependence took his will into his own hands out of God's hands and then violated his trust why didn't God destroy him finish that right away and start again there and then well that's easy isn't it talk like that perhaps that's what you would do perhaps

that's what you think he ought to have done in view of all we know do you not see that for God to have done that would have been to have simply said he never did give man free will to have nullified the whole principle of option he would have destroyed at once the primary thing free will it is never free will if when you use it you are at once destroyed for doing so no but what did God do what did God do ah that's history that's history the Lord's way has been and still is like it or not to let the choice have full course and destroy itself bring its own judgment upon itself that's history it's a long term business a long drawn out business and just into that into that let me say a thing a very intimate thing to you and to my own heart there are some prayers that God answers which oh to

God he'd never answer would to God he'd never answer because man would not take a no or an alternative the little fragment about Israel long stiff neckedness and hardness of heart this little fragment is he gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul have you ever prayed and insisted and refused to take a no or an alternative a wish to God he'd never answered your prayer that's possible it's where your will is on your own side or on his side there's a lot spiritual history bound up with that isn't there but here we are saying that the Lord has taken all time to demonstrate the folly the madness the iniquity of this wrong use of a sacred tongue note then the development of this all the immense potentialities to which we for ourselves in man have been allowed to express

themselves have been drawn out by history and today we are amazed we marvel at the potentialities in man why in the last fifty years what a story of the uncovering, unveiling and exploiting of the potentialities in man make no mistake about it in five hundred years we've moved from the making of iron cannon balls to the atomic bomb call that progress to you but look what man can do what is in man to do we are all wondering aren't we what he's going to do next if things go on for another fifty years as they've gone on in the last fifty my where shall we be where shall we be this is no no jewels bound imagination is it these are realities realities it's going apace and all this is in the man that God made me but do you recognize and recognize with the acceleration and the intensification of

this process that man has never yet either made a discovery or an invention but what there has come along a parallel curse with it a new problem that almost almost did not all together be devil's any realm you like any realm you like oh that we were here long enough to survey the ground adequately that's all we can do these potentialities which were in the man that God created have been given full play by God through all time to express themselves but but always with a curse what is a curse what is a curse I could put the curse into one word fear fear the further man goes the more fearful he becomes it's fear fear that is alive to the greatest discoveries and inventions of man it's fear dear friends that is ruling men's hearts today they are conscious of insecurity mother insecurity they

are striving for some kind of security in order to overcome this fear this fear the bible is right you know it always is it is right on this that a mark of the end time will be men's hearts failing them for fear oh you would only have to read some of the books that have been produced by the discoverers of the nuclear and they'll tell you they'll tell you in unvarnished language that it only wants the touch of a finger to end the whole human race by this very thing that they have discovered and are now exploiting the end of the human race and an awful end have you read the story of Hiroshima Nagasaki spread that over the whole

human race now I don't want to be a sensationalist but these are facts they are in volume form by the very men who are mostly related associated with this very

matter men are afraid there is a fear in their hearts and all this effort to find some way of security security isn't that a word today because of this fear and mark you the point is this that is accentuated and intensified the further men go in their inventions and discoveries and in the development of the potentialities in their own beings that's the end coming very near I repeat God has taken all history and what a lot that word history covers past, present and future it's not a contradiction to speak of the future as history but there is a history that is being made for the future history is on the one side demonstrating beyond any question or doubt that man has oh he has made a mistake somewhere he has gone wrong somewhere he has defaulted somewhere no worse than that he has done

something infinitely evil and it's come out of himself by the wrong use of his own will his own will do you not see are we blind are we blind are we not taking account I said seriously minded people are concerned about history are you not taking account of this that where the state of things in development of uncovering of intensification of application of discovery of invention everything is most pronounced you have the most awful strength of human will against God against God isn't that true that is beyond any argument it's a soul strength a strength of human soul and how we fail to see that the one thing that history has revealed is this contradiction this strange but so patent paradox the greatness of man and at the same time his smallness the greater he seems to be the less he seems

to be able to cope with his own dreams is that true he has brought it out now he is a mere pawn a mere puppet a mere plaything of his own greatness how little he is at his greatness greatest isn't it true well look that's the way of history and that's what's happening dear friend the greatness of man the greatness of man yes as God made him but now because of this one thing a greatness that is cancerous no other word to explain and define it it is a cancerous greatness what is cancer what is cancer well I can't answer all the research on that matter but I'll tell you what is know that cancer exists because of the loss of one central governing and regulating authority got that it is something that is broken away from authority and ignores controlling and regulating authority in the

organism and becomes an authority in itself becomes something that is something in itself has absolutely refused that central authority regulating and governing within the organism taking things into its own hands that's cancer this greatness of man is like that look at it it has broken right away from the great controlling authority of God and God's will the authority of God the answer what a scourge on humanity now at that point where it's possible I could put in a tremendous section by way of illustration I only have to mention things without without any additional words what about international relationships what are you going to do with it what are you going to do oh the tentacle this cancerous thing in human life in humanity now you cut one off and half a dozen more spring up at

once isn't it like that international relationships why you think that you've just got the thing nicely settled and it breaks out in more than one other place cannot cope with this cannot be up side with this international relationship you've got all the existing potential of a prosperous and happy world but upon it what a curse destruction instead all the instruments and the institutions for peace and there was never so much loss of peace in human history all the amenities and facilities for rest for rest for rest think of all your gadgets save work think of all the inventions to make life easy never so many amenities and facilities for rest and leisure and never in history so much discontent is that so something wrong with this humanity and we might look at industry and we might look at

science and we might even look at religion if you want me to stop somewhere so I must leave it there for the moment that's one side one side but dear friends we're not talking just objectively that is you, that is me by nature the deepest truest thing about you and about me naturally is self-will is pride is possessiveness is can you agree with me? all right all right you'll allow the Holy Spirit to take you anywhere at all and you'll discover that is true that's first man that's the old Adam and you will see at once how that opens the door for the second man and the last Adam to start things all over again on another basis to be the racial firstborn and head and progenitor of another kind and you'll see a lot more once you've seen that but I am very well aware that all that I have said

may be oppressive may be the heavy side but friends, you and I have got to understand history and present history what it means what it means what are the forces and what are the things that are producing this marvelous wonderful amazing startling terrible world and where is it leading? well, you see, God has said all right all right you have made your choice you have decided this and you would not have it otherwise very well very well the history of a kind person or race like that will lead on and on and on until the final verdict of sin sin is wrought up it's I wonder if you still bear with me just this moment something that you'll be well to just store up you know, dear friends one of the things that is going to amaze us perhaps more than most other things a few things will amaze us

when we get to heaven will be this our discovery of how much more infinitely more there was in any one statement of God than ever we imagined when God speaks, he doesn't speak just platitudes he does not speak just observations and remarks casually in anything that God says there is the infinitude of his knowledge and his wisdom and if any life comes into the hands of the Holy Spirit that's when you discover there is an unfathomable depth of meaning in anything that God has said and you'll never exhaust it preach, preach, preach on the same thing all your long life and you haven't exhausted that same thing it's come from God and I say we're going to be amazed when we get to heaven to see the infinitude of what was in some things which were all most commonplace things with us oh, if God

uses the word sin disobedience rebellion self-will there's all time gathered into that in tragedy you never, never will fathom that the last Adam did went to the bottom of it drained it in his cross but that's where the other side opens up we'll go on later

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