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## A Man in the Glory

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*Reading:* Hebrews 2:5-12.

This portion of the Scriptures is a condensation of all that the Bible, and especially the New Testament, is about. It is a strange thing to say, yet it is quite true, that at this late hour in the New Testament dispensation our greatest need, as the people of God, is to know what we have come into, what Christ means, and what we, as the Lord's people, are called unto.

### **The Need of Assurance**

That need has several aspects. You will, I am quite sure, agree that one aspect of our need is that of assurance, of confidence, of being settled, rooted, grounded with an unwavering hope. We all have need of being so confirmed in the faith, so established, that we are not easily shaken in our minds nor moved in our confidence. That need is present with us, and that need, I think, is going to be felt more and more, as things become increasingly difficult - the need for the Lord's people in this world to be established and fully assured. There is need of strength, real strength, amongst the Lord's people, deliverance from weakness, from feebleness, so that they can go on, make progress, and really grow, for where there is uncertainty, where there is weakness, then there will be slowness of progress, then there will be real limitation in spiritual development.

### **The Need of Understanding**

Further, there is the great need of understanding, especially understanding of God's ways and God's dealings with His people, to know why the Lord deals with them and with us as He does, to have the meaning of the Lord's ways and the Lord's works which are so strange and often so difficult for us to understand. These are aspects of the great need which we all feel.

### **The Meaning of the Incarnation the Answer to all Our Need**

This passage of Scripture, as I have said, is a condensed statement of that which goes to the very heart of that need. It brings us to the infinite wonder and mystery of the incarnation. If we could grasp the meaning of the incarnation, God manifest in the flesh, we should have an answer to all our questions, and all our many-sided need would be met.

Notice this twofold "not". "*For NOT unto angels did he subject the world to come*" (verse 5), and "*verily NOT of angels doth he take hold*" (verse 1:6, A.R.V. margin), "*but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham*". "Not unto angels", "not of angels". The first is not angels, but man. What is man? The second, not of angels but of the seed of Abraham. Man - that is humanity; the seed of Abraham - that is covenant love, love in covenant. You look in your margin and you probably find a reference, taking you back to the Old Testament, about the seed of Abraham (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8), and you find the immediate context is 'Abraham, the friend of God' - of the seed of Abraham, the friend of God - God's covenant love. That is the direction in which this wonderful mystery of the incarnation lies, in the direction of man, of humanity, and in the direction of man brought into the covenant love of God.

Here the upshot, the issue, the grand climax of this whole paragraph is - "*We behold... Jesus*". Oh, the music of that Name - for we are permitted in the right connection to use that name by itself. I know the modern school drops all the other titles, speaks not of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus, but is always talking about 'Jesus', making Him one amongst many, though perhaps somewhat better than other men; and that of course is evil. But here and there in the New Testament we have this name used by itself, and rightly so. "*We behold... Jesus... crowned with glory and honour*". Jesus is the name of Him who emptied Himself, of Him who became man, who took our humanity, a body like our body, a soul like our souls. He took our manhood - He, Jesus, crowned with glory and honour - to bring to glory and honour our humanity, our manhood. That is the heart of Christianity.

Consider our humanity: let us look at ourselves, take account of ourselves, what we are as human beings; these bodies, at best, at worst; these souls - an everlasting trouble. Yes, our humanity: what a thing it is! Those of us who have come into touch with the enlightening Spirit of God in any real way have nothing to say for our humanity. We would be more inclined to apologize for *being* at all. And He has taken hold of our humanity to bring it to the place where it is crowned with glory and honour. That is redemption. That is why the passage goes back to the very first. "*Thou didst set him over the works of thy hands.*" "*Thou crownedst him with glory and honour*" - potentially declared. "*Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet.*" That was man's creational purpose, but he failed of it, missed it all, and became the humanity that we know him to be. And there came from heaven One who took hold of that humanity, and took it through all its trials, all its temptations, all its pressures and its stresses, through all its opposition and its antagonisms, through all the full force that came to bear upon it for its destruction. He took that humanity through it all, perfected it, took it to glory - our humanity, your humanity and mine, this troublesome thing, and made it fit to abide the very presence of the infinitely holy and glorious God. That was indeed "bringing many sons unto glory".

The Bible is full of that in figure, in portrait - the union of the Divine with the human. You have it in the figure of the Cherubim, and in the figure of the Ark of the Testimony - the wood, the common wood of the desert, overlaid with the gold. You have it right through. God is testifying - for this is the ark of *testimony* - testifying that from glory He has laid hold on humanity and is going to bring it through into the Most Holy Place where it is to abide forever. The last picture of the ark of the *testimony* is in that Holy Place in the Temple, when they drew out the staves. It is there forever in the presence of God. Its journey has ended, it is crowned with glory and honour - Christ and you and I in union in the presence of God. I say, that is the heart of everything, and if you and I need, as I have said, assurance and confidence, remember that God has entered into covenant love with us to do this. Do we want anything to give us greater and deeper assurance and confidence and hope than this, that God has entered into covenant love?

Every time we gather at His Table and partake of the symbols, we are entering into the meaning of that covenant love, as the seed of Abraham. What a mighty covenant is in that Blood! What a mighty covenant in that body of the Lord Jesus! We are made partakers of His flesh, of His bone, of His very life. This is covenant love. What assurance that should bring to us, what strength for progress - for if we have not that assurance and hope, how slow we are to go on; how difficult it is to maintain a going-on position and course. We may take a step forward - and then there enter in thoughts about ourselves, some accusation from our own hearts: the enemy comes because of some thing that is in us, and we find ourselves two steps backward. A little on, and then a rest, and then back where we were, because of uncertainty springing from the humanity that we are.

### **Jesus in Glory Our Confidence**

The absolute strength of certainty to keep going on is in our faith hold on the humanity that is in heaven. "*We behold*". You see, this letter eventually arrives there. There are all those who have run this race of faith, and they were weak men many of them. They are not the pick of the world's best in themselves. The story of their failures and of being men of like passions with ourselves is not covered up by the Lord; it is fully exposed; but they have run the race. And then it says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" - "crowned with glory and honour": the guarantee that we will be there crowned with glory and honour through faith in Him. You can have as little faith in yourself as you like, perhaps the less the better, but do not stay there with your no faith in yourself. Your strength to go on is in looking off from yourself unto "Jesus... crowned with glory and honour". Does it convey something to you, that here is a man tempted and tried, as we have been, through the fires of antagonism and evil that were always seeking to scorch Him, to mar Him? He got through, He triumphed, "crowned with glory and honour". Did He do it for Himself? No, He did it for us, as us. Our strength to go on is in looking off.

### **The Explanation of God's Ways With Us**

And as for God's ways with us, His strange ways, His sometimes seemingly hard ways. What about understanding all these? There is the explanation - "crowned with glory and honour", "conformed to the image of His Son". We are going through the fires; we are being tried, tested, up to the hilt; we are really having a difficult time in the hands of God. But what is it doing? Well, sometimes it seems that the fires are just making manifest all that is bad in us, as it comes to the surface. But look again into the crucible. That scum, that dross, is on the surface, it has come to the surface all right. But what is underneath? The gold is underneath. We see what is on the surface; it is the things that are seen that we take note of - but God is doing something deep down. It would not be for our good to

know all that God is doing deep down. We should, in our poor humanity, at once become spiritually proud. The last thing for our good is that. But He is doing something deep down underneath. He is refining the gold, even if we are more conscious of the surface dross than of anything else. He is going to crown us with glory and honour, that we should be held in honour before God. That is a mystery, but we have to accept it.

Jesus has actually taken our human nature and has carried it through into the presence of God, and it is there through all testing and difficulty and adversity. It is exalted. Our humanity is already exalted in the presence of God to glory and honour, and He, being there, is the pledge that, whereas the presence of God would be our utter destruction, we are going to abide the presence of God without destruction. He is the pledge of that.

### **The Need for Objective Faith**

I close with this. If you have lost it, if you are in danger of losing it, or if you have never yet adequately grasped it, lay hold on your great objective faith. You may have become so subjective in your faith, in your doctrine, that you are wholly occupied with what is inside yourself, and that is a devastating thing. You never have any encouragement or hope along that line. May the Lord recover our balance between objective and subjective truth, and restore to us the full balance of this great fact, this glorious fact, without which all the subjective will be for our undoing. There is One in the glory who, tempted in all points like as we, sin apart, took our humanity through the fires, far keener and more intense fires than we know anything about. He is there as us - the pledge that we are going to be there. To me it is wonderful. This is the Gospel, this is the substance, the essence, the heart of Christianity. The incarnation is the very core of Christianity. Oh yes, we are not going, the longer we live, to have a better opinion of ourselves, to begin to be able to congratulate ourselves. It is going to be worse and worse along that line, but the counter to it all is *"Christ in you, the hope of glory" - "crowned with glory and honour"*.