

# Gods Order in Christ - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the significance of the cross in bringing about a new order of divine harmony and completeness, where Christ is back in his place and man is back in his right environment in God.*

**Duration:** 50:23

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:38-40, Matthew 22:1-14, Matthew 27:51

**Topics:** "Order In Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher references the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark and the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. He highlights the request of the scribes and Pharisees for a sign from Jesus, to which Jesus responds that only the sign of Jonah will be given. The preacher then connects this to the parable of the fig tree in which Jesus expresses disappointment in Israel's lack of fruitfulness. He further emphasizes the significance of the cross and the tearing of the temple veil, symbolizing the removal of the barrier between man and God. The sermon concludes with the preacher reflecting on Jesus' cry of forsakenness on the cross, representing the completion of God's plan to deal with sin and bring hope to humanity.

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## Transcript

With the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by Mark, fresh in our memories, I just want to place alongside of it some words from the Gospel by Matthew in chapter twelve. At verse thirty-eight, then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.

There shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. It does so happen, it's not deliberately arranged so that this evening in memory, we are in that period between the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

A period of three days and three nights. And it is upon the significance of that that we are going to dwell a little while this evening in close contact with all that has gone before in this time of gathering. And we note in the first place, quite simply, the symbolic number that is chosen here, the symbolic number three.

Not just chance or hap, but by divinely deliberate choice. By very much foreshadowing and forecasting, as is here intimated, that Jonah's experience was in itself a prophecy. Jonah did not understand why that

particular period should be appointed for him to be where he was in the depths, in the darkness.

But in that divine ordering of things, all the way through, one mind, one mind of God, always having his son in view, it was no mere chance that Jonah went into the fish and stayed there for three days and three nights. The number itself, right through the scripture, always carries with it a certain significance. It is the number of divine completeness.

You come on that number, that is what you find. It is the number of the very Godhead itself. The trinity, the triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one and complete.

It is the number of man, spirit, soul and body. The apostle says, your whole, the whole of you, spirit, soul and body, preserved, blameless. Man as a whole is a trinity, three in one.

And so we could go on for a long time through the Bible and outside of the Bible, finding that this number comprehends threefold realm of things which makes for completeness. But it is particularly related to the death of Christ. It's impressive to note this.

We've read it. He was crucified at the third hour. There was darkness over the whole earth from the sixth to the ninth hour, three hours.

There was an inscription nailed to his cross in three languages, Latin and Greek and Hebrew. And then he was in the heart of the earth, as the description itself, three days, three nights. What does it mean? Why in the sovereignty of God has this number been nailed to the death of the Lord Jesus to govern it? Well, I think it's perfectly clear.

You see, it's the completeness of the work of his cross. The completeness of his death in all its significance. It's something that is full, something that is complete.

It requires this number. You take one, you can't do much with it. You've got to add something to it.

If you take two, you can't shut up anything in two lines. You've got to add a third to make a triangle. And that is your very first geometrical way of containing anything.

It's enough to contain all that you want. The death of Christ governed by this number is something which is complete. Now, we in these gatherings have been occupied, with the exception of this afternoon, entirely with this particular relationship of Christ to an eternal heavenly order, which obtained, and then which was destroyed, and which he came to recover.

And the first thing that the death or the cross of the Lord Jesus says, in the light of this number three, which is so much in evidence, is that in the cross, that old disorder is fully and finally finished. It's completed. In himself, and in this universe, by his cross it is potentially brought to conclusion.

The old disorder is finished. The death of Christ says emphatically that with God, with heaven, all that belongs to that disruption in the universe, that dislocation, that upset which Satan has brought in, all that no longer obtains before God and before heaven. He has put an end to it in his cross.

That's the statement of a fact. But it's a tremendous reality upon which God works continually in the life of every believer, and particularly in the life of his church. It's a thing, dear friends, that we should remember, we should know and continually remember, that God, from his side, is never working toward anything.

From his side, he is always working backward. He is working back to what was, both in his mind, in times eternal, and which he had actually in his creative activity. There it was.

He has never given it up. All the departure is away. God is always coming back.

Always coming back. God is never saying to man, you must come on to me. He is saying, you must come back to me.

It's only in us where we are concerned that we are moving toward a consummation. But God is always working backward. The cross is the ground toward which he is always working back, to bring us back.

Every bit of his activity in our lives is to bring us back to what he meant in that cross. That cross was full, complete, and final as to an old, disrupted system. God has said in the cross, that's finished.

Now, you can't come back to that all at once, or you, there'd be nothing of you left. But all through your life, I'm bringing you back there. A bit more of that thing which the cross cancelled out and finished.

It's got to go. It's got to go. He's working back to that.

God is always doing that. You see, it means that God, while he bears and forbears and is very patient and long-suffering with a lot that he will not have, he never will accept it. He never will accept it.

He may be patient, but he doesn't accept it. The cross says about that which Satan brought into his universe, that's completed. Nothing of that has any standing.

We understood the workings of God in our lives. We do understand, we say so much about the cross at work in us. What is it? What does it mean? Simply that.

Still a lot that God is not accepting. He's been very patient over it for a long time. But sooner or later we've got to come to God's finality about the whole thing.

Completeness about the whole thing. And ultimate perfection, where we are concerned, is only the complete fulfillment of the work of the cross in us. Making true in us of that which Calvary meant in itself.

It's the old disorder that is fully dealt with. That's the comprehensive thing. Within that compass there's, of course, very much we shall not stay to even mention.

But one thing can be mentioned. There was an old system in the Old Testament. An old system that was in type and symbol and figure intended to point to this very fact.

Of what the cross means. Of an end. Of everything that is not of heaven.

That Jewish system was a system that in every part declared, declared this truth of Calvary. That what is of Satan's doing has no place with God. Here is another order, a heavenly order, introduced in this system of types and figures.

A heavenly order, another order. It all implied that. It all pointed to that.

But it was a system that utterly failed. It utterly failed. The whole Jewish system, with all its implications and meaning from God's standpoint, it failed completely.

It never did bring in the heavenly order. And Calvary says an end then to a system that fails. To every system that fails to produce what God wants.

Even though that system may have been prescribed by God for a purpose. If it does not result in or lead to this heavenly order, out it must go. Be it Christian or Jewish, if it does not produce the heavenly order, Calvary says it's finished.

There is an immense amount of Christianity that is going to go under divine judgment. Because it has the name of Christian on it, there is no guarantee that it is going to stand. Oh no, Christianity as a mere system will go the same way as Judaism.

The cross has said this one thing. Only that which really does put away all that is not of heaven. Only that which does bring in what is of heaven has any standing with God now.

The cross makes that declaration. You remember the parable of our Lord which is directed at Israel and Judaism? That tree, that tree and the looking and the expecting of fruit and the verdict. Listen, these three years have I come seeking fruit.

These three years. The completeness of opportunity. The completeness of disappointment in a system.

That tree was Israel. God said I have given Israel a complete, a perfect opportunity. And surely anybody who knows will agree.

Every people had an opportunity with every provision to produce fruit. They didn't. God was complete in the provision that he made, in the patience that he showed.

But these three years, no fruit. Therefore, cut it down. Therefore, wither it from the root.

See, that was a system, Israel. Judaism was a system brought in by God. But it is not the thing, dear friends, this is the point, it is not the thing, it is that for which the thing is intended.

It is not the truth that you and I have. Not the teaching that we possess. Not all that has come to us outwardly, it is does it produce what God intended.

That's the point. Does it bring us through to the heavenly thing, actually? Does it lead us out of that confusion and disorder which contradicts the mind and will of God? The cross, you see, is a very utter thing in that matter. It speaks also of the completeness of God's abandonment of the world.

That world is the world of a disrupted system. Order. It lies in the wicked one.

That needs no argument. If ever, if ever, we wanted proof of this great truth, well, it's all around us today. Our daily papers are full of it.

Column after column of this lawlessness, this anarchy, this disruption and disorder. It's just there, it's the problem of all countries today. It's everywhere.

And it's forcing its way in to the very Church of God. It's everywhere. The great trouble today is just that, isn't it? Lawlessness.

Disorder. Repudiation of authority and control. Worse and worse.

Now, in the cross, because that whole thing is expressive and demonstrative of a broken down divine order in the cross, God said that world is cut off, is put away. We have a great illustration of that in the Old Testament. In Israel's coming out of Egypt.

Do you remember the prescription for Pharaoh? From which neither God nor Moses would depart one hair's breadth three days' journey into the wilderness. No less. Three.

Three days' journey into the wilderness. Pharaoh may bargain, but Moses is adamant. He may do everything.

Retain. To limit. But no.

The number is fixed. Divinely fixed. Three days' journey into the wilderness.

Of course, the Lord knew what that meant. Perhaps Pharaoh had some idea. That get that far and they're gone.

They're lost. They're beyond recovery. They get that far.

Well, that's God's meaning at any rate. The completeness of separation from this world. Number three.

That's God's thought in the church. Church is a long time coming to it. Christians are a long time coming to it.

To see that what is called worldliness was nailed to that cross with the Lord Jesus fully, finally, and utterly. None of it stands with God. He'll be patient and long-suffering.

But sooner or later, we shall be brought up against this fact. That to tolerate, to allow, to condone anything that the cross is set against is to jeopardize at least our own spiritual life. To find us out somewhere with God.

Out of favor with God. And if we want still stronger proof of this, note that after this great double three, crucified the third hour, darkness over all the earth for three hours, it was then that the cry went forth, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Abandoned by God. That's the end.

Terrible and awful end. There's nothing beyond that. There's no hope when it's like that.

No hope at all. No, it's darkness indeed for three hours. When it's like that, we see a completeness of darkness.

When God turns away and forsakes, We know it was because he there in his cross gathered to himself all these evil forces in the first place which had brought this world's disruption. And to himself all the sin of this disrupted man gathered it to himself. And God said, finish with that completely and forever.

And turned away and abandoned that one. In that capacity, the cry of forsakenness is the great cry of something that is forever finished. Finished with by God.

Well, we see that for those three days, we just have a little glimpse of what happened with the twelve and with the larger companies. It was a scene of desolation. A scene of desolation, of despair, of disappointment.

Like that, the cross, you see, has written that and registered that. You and I, dear friends, while it's very terrible, have got still to be impressed with the utterness, the completeness of the work of the cross. Now that's one of the three great aspects of the cross.

It is the darkest. Indeed, it is the dark. There's a second.

And upon this, of course, we believers dwell with that profound discredit. It was in our first hymn, yes, the completeness of the removal of everything that comes between us and God. How complete was the work where our sin is concerned.

Nothing left to be done. Nothing left to be done. Judgment exhausted upon that one for us.

Nothing left to be done. Well, that's the theme for eternity. What we refer to as the finished work.

The finished work. We always move, as we remember, or are reminded, that that word finished doesn't just mean that you've reached the end. That word means it's complete.

It's complete. There's nothing to be added. Nothing more to be done.

It's complete. It's whole. It's full.

The cross says that. We mention it. To pass on to the next, the other side, you see.

The completeness and utterness of the new order, which is made possible by the cross. The way to which is opened up by the cross. I want to put emphasis upon the two words, the utterness of the new order that is brought in through the cross.

We have seen earlier that all the disruption and the disorder in this universe came by an attempt to put the Son of God out of his place. His divinely appointed place. That is what happened in the Garden.

Man put himself in the place of the Son of God. The Son of God was displaced. And everything that we know of this anarchy and chaos and disruption was followed in the train of that.

Because in him all things consist. In him all things hold together. Put him out, and things fall to pieces.

The cross not only dealt with that, but made a way for this. And this is the glory of the new order, that Christ is back in his place. Christ is back in his place.

That's the shout of triumph, isn't it? That's the message of the evangel. That is what they are saying wherever they go, beginning in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Jesus Christ is Lord.

He's back in his place. It's the beginning of a new creation. It's the beginning of the recovery of the lost order in this universe.

He is the head of the creation. He is the head of everything. He's back in his place.

It's only when he is back in his place that things begin to be set right. The cross you see means this. It means this.

Everything has got to be this place that gets in the place of the Lord Jesus. And so, the new order was an utter thing, beginning with this completeness of his exaltation. God raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand, far above all rule and authority and principality and power.

He is in his place again. Back there. Now from that, God says, we'll get on with the work.

We'll reconstitute everything. But you notice the next thing, Christ in his place. That's the beginning of everything, dear friends.

It is for salvation, for every aspect of redemption, for the recovery of that lost divine harmony in the universe. It all starts there. Jesus in his right place.

But notice what happened next. What we said earlier was this, that it's all a matter of environment. We took an illustration from the human body, that we are told by those who know about it, These living cells, which constitute the very life being of the human body, these living cells, the millions and millions of them, are all environed by something.

This lymph. And in that environment, in a healthy body, this lymph. And in that environment, in a healthy body, there are those things necessary to their very life.

Progress and reproduction. And there is in the healthy body the absence of all that which is detrimental to their life. We lifted that illustration out and showed how God has written his spiritual laws in all his material creation, and in our bodies particularly.

The life of every cell depends upon its environment. And you and I are cells in the great body corporate. Disease and disorder, disruption and death came in when man got out of his right environment, which is God.

In God there is everything that is needed for the sustenance and nourishment of the life of man. In God there is nothing poisonous to injure man's life. God is our environment.

Man stepped out of his environment, and all this has resulted. Now you notice what happens after the cross. When man is brought back into God.

Into God, in Christ. In Christ, in Christ, in Christ, that is, back into God. He came to bring us back into God.

When that happens, man is back in his environment in God. Christ becomes his new environment. And you see in the New Testament what a living, living condition obtains.

Right there and then. These people, they are living in the Lord, aren't they? They are just living in the Lord. Difficult to put it, to explain it, but this is what it amounts to.

Christ was their whole sphere, their whole realm, their whole world. Their environment. And as they were drawing upon him, you see, a new order beginning to show itself.

They continued steadfastly, they continued steadfastly. In the teaching, in the breaking of bread, in fellowship, in prayer. A new order is coming in, a new relationship, a new fellowship.

It's very beautiful at the beginning, and it's all because they are back in their right environment. We have a lot in the New Testament, of course, that speaks of the need of the meaning of the cross in Christians. In

that very respect.

How things break down when the cross is not doing its work or allowed to do its work. We have it in Corinth. And I think it's a very impressive thing, dear friends, in the light of what we've been saying.

That Paul said about the condition of things in Corinth that there were many sick among them. And some even died. Why? Why? They had got out of their environment of life and health, which was the Lord.

In other words, they had not come into all that the cross meant. They were not allowing the cross to mean that to them which was even bodily life. The condition of things was a great declaration, testimony to the fact that if you abide in Christ, it's a good thing for you.

It's a matter of life and not death. It's a matter of strength, not weakness. So it was there.

Well, this is what Paul saw at least, and others too. And constantly, continually used that little phrase, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ. We haven't got that yet, you know.

And all its profound depth of meaning, Christ is the living environment of the new creation. There it is. If any man be in Christ, there's a new creation.

The old things are passed away. It's a new way. A new and living way.

It's called a new way. But here it is. Come back to the cross in our chapter this evening.

What happened? At the end of the double three, when it is completed, and he cried with a loud voice, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. That veil was typical or symbolic of the barrier between man and God. Between earth and heaven.

God is behind that, and the veil says, no entrance. No entrance. Stay out.

Now, I think this is all very wonderful. Go back to the beginning. In the garden, and Satan has displaced God's Son in the heart of man.

The disruption has come in, and God, what does he do? He drove out the man from the garden. He drove him out from paradise, and closed the door, and set his cherubim with a flaming sword at the door. He said, outside you are.

There's no way in. Listen to Jesus. Listen to Jesus, with his wonderful story of the king who made a supper for his son.

Invited the guests who spurned his offer and invitation. What does he say? To his servants he says, go out into the highways and the byways, and compel them to come in. But my house may be full.

What a reversing. Outside. No way in.

The door is shut. Compel them to come in. Something's happened to open the door.

Something has happened. The veil has been rent from the top, from heaven, in the cross of the Lord Jesus. That which said outside and no entrance has now been split asunder and the way is right open.

An open heaven through the cross. Compel them to come in. Changed altogether, isn't it? And the divine attitude which once was no way in.

The veil while it hung through all the centuries was just saying no way in. No way into God. No way in.

And now it is, compel them to come in. But my house may be full. The way in is open.

By the cross it's split open. The cross of the Lord Jesus speaks of a new and a living way, to quote from the letter to the Hebrews. A new way.

But it's a new way that never was before since man sinned. It's a new life. It's a new position.

He is in heaven and now we are regarded as seated together with him in the heavenlies. It's a new position. It's a new power.

Power of the Spirit come down from heaven. How powerless they were. How powerless they were.

Their leader, the chief amongst them, in speech and in action is powerless before a little serving maid in the hall of power. Powerless. All carriage, all boasting, just gone like a mist.

There. Listen to him now. Before those self-same rulers in Israel, whether it be right for us to obey God or man, you judge.

We haven't any question about this matter. Do as you like. That's what it means.

Do as you like with us. We stand here. True to that one whom you crucified.

A new power has come in. And when we turn to the letter to the Hebrews we find ourselves once in the presence of the new order. It's a heavenly order now.

It's not an earthly. It is not made with hands, to use the very phrase there. Not made with hands.

Not something of man's creating. Not something of man's ingenuity or organizing ability, whatever. It's something heavenly is this new order.

It's something that is not of time. For anything that is of time goes old. It grows old.

It loses, therefore, its vitality. You know that's true of a lot of Christianity. And it becomes something made by man, organized by man, planned and run by man.

It becomes a thing of time. And it only endures during man's time. It's of the earth.

This new order is something from heaven and it is not of time. It is of eternity. Dear friends, take all that this implies, if you can.

I'm making statements, but in the back of my mind I'm seeing so much more of what this implies. We have got to be very careful that we do not bring heavenly things down to earth. And make eternal things merely time things.

That we do not take hold of heavenly things and shape them into an earthly system. They forever to be heavenly, living, eternal, vibrant with newness. Newness.

There's got to be something of newness about everything all the way along. The cross says that, you see. There's got to be continuous newness.

Oh, it's very true. If we're in this new creation and walking according to this new life, we don't come to an end of anything. We're constantly coming to new beginnings, new releases, new openings up, new fullnesses.

Newness is the hallmark. New. Because there's a new man.

Individual and corporate. A new man. In Christ.

Who is the inclusive new man. The heavenly man. The man in whom life is.

I must leave it there. But the emphasis is here. The cross of the Lord Jesus, those three days and three nights, do say so utterly.

One whole order is finished, or disorder is finished. And another, which is so utterly different, completely different, comes in on the other side of the cross. It's all got to be like that.

Starting from zero. Completely at every stage and in every phase. Something new.

Something new. Oh, may we never get old in our spiritual life. Never get old in our order of things, so that it's set and fixed.

I'm not saying we've got to try and be novel and original in our methods. I'm saying there's got to be something about it that is not just a dead custom. A repetition of things all the time.

But there's got to be about it a freshness, a newness, a livingness. That is what it means that he completed the old and put it away. And by so doing, opened the way for all things to be made new.

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