

The Cross and Eternal Glory - Part 5

by T. Austin-Sparks

The cross is the instrument by which God brings man to his intended place, and it is the shadow of the eternal glory.

Duration: 56:45

Scripture: Genesis 3:21, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Eternal Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the Bible as a whole rather than just focusing on individual verses or fragments. The Bible is seen as a book that relates to one central theme, which is the eternal glory of God. The speaker suggests that everything in the Bible, from the first page to the last, is governed by this theme and should be interpreted in light of it. By grasping this central theme, one can unlock the meaning and significance of every book and subject in the Bible. The speaker encourages listeners to approach their study of the Bible with this perspective in order to gain a deeper understanding of its message.

Transcript

It may interest those friends who were with us on Saturday and who were unable to be with us yesterday to know that we have not moved on in this particular matter before us from the point where we left it on Saturday evening. Yesterday was occupied with other things so that we're able to go on together from that point in relation to this matter of the cross and the eternal glory. But here again, just a preliminary word, it is of immense help and value to be able to see the Bible as a whole, to have all that is in it from the first to the last page gathered up under one thing so that we can see that everything in it is governed by that one thing or relates to that one thing.

The Bible has become so largely a book of text or promises for peculiar needs and situations and little bits for devotional purposes or subjects for preaching and teaching and in the main, these all just detached fragments. Of course, that's all right. We want our promises for our special needs.

We want our portions, our daily portions and we want to understand the distinctive subjects but it is very much more profitable to be able to see that everything in the Bible relates to one thing and to see how it does relate to that one thing. In some way or another, everything in the Bible focuses upon one thing and if we can just get our hand upon that one thing then we have the key for every door in the Bible, every book and every subject and we are, at this time, seeking to bring that one comprehensive and all-inclusive

thing into view. I trust that you will take your Bible in the future and always see its parts in relation to the whole.

We'll make your Bible live for you in a new way if you do that. Many parts that you won't understand in themselves, far too complex or difficult or deep or even meaningless if you can just see how that fits in to a whole taking on new meaning and new life. The whole is the eternal glory.

From eternity to eternity, God's object has been a creation with man at its center reflecting himself as the God of glory. The end to which he is watching and which he will most assuredly realize is such a universe just filled with his glory. The Bible then must be seen pro and con in the light of day.

It must be seen either as setting forth that which can be glorified, which can come to glory or, on the other hand, that which must go in order that God may reach with it. Those two aspects then are governing our thought and our consideration at this time. We reach the point on Saturday night in that first section going back before times eternal, before the foundations of world and taking account of those intimations given us, especially by our Lord Jesus himself as to his place in the pre-creation glory as he sought the Father to glorify him with the glory which he had with him before the world was.

Alongside of that, we took another passage indicating that he was not to be alone in that glory but that God had made known the mystery of his will now in this dispensation that we should be unto the praise of his glory. And that, as you know, is a phrase connected with an elect people, the Church, unto the praise of his glory. So Christ and his Church are united in those pre-creations, thoughts and intentions of God that we are made to know as the will, the mystery of his will, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

And we've thrown that word will up into capitals and quotes because it's governing. The will then leading to creative activity, bringing in a new world order at the beginning of this history. We went on to note the rift, the rift in heaven by a great revolt which took place there and then its repercussions, or shall we say its reproduction in human history, the capture of man made for God's glory.

And we ended up with the forward thrust of the will and saw coming right down from the eternity to come yet to be the shadow of a man, the man. Thrown right down the ages, right to the beginning of the creation, Adam was a figure of him that was to come, we are told. From that intimation the figure of the man is discernible right through the Bible in some way or another.

What he really is and what is the caricature of him or the contradiction of him. By all contradictions God is forcefully found to be saying this is not according to my man. Shadow the man and then to reach that end, to realize that glorified man as filling the whole creation, the shadow of the cross.

I'm not an artist. If I were an artist, I'd like to throw this diagram in this way. Having the effulgent light coming down from the eternity yet to be and throwing its rays upon that cross and then through that cross the shadow of the cross right back over Old Testament history.

Well that's what it is. It's the glory taking hold of the cross and making the cross its instrument of bringing man to where God intended him to be and intends him to be to the eternal glory. It's the glory of the cross and the glory by the cross.

The shadow of the cross therefore is thrown by the very light of eternity down the age. You can't have a shadow without light. If you're going to have a shadow of the cross it must be made by light and it is the

light of the glory.

The cross becomes illumined in its meaning and significance by the glory. Well that leads us then to this morning and our next phase and stage in this whole matter which is only in the first place an enlargement of what we have just said. Mediation and the glory.

This peculiarly characterizes that first section of the Bible, the first five books, Genesis, Deuteronomy. Immediately because of that revolt, that rebellion in man's heart, the glory was withdrawn and put into resale against the great work of redemption and recovery. Immediately the glory was withdrawn.

The altar came into view. Or should I say sacrifice came into view. It's not the simplest hint that is given.

The word altar is not used. Neither is the word sacrifice but it is certainly implied. You have it in the third chapter, the book of Genesis, verse 21.

And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins and clothed them. The first intimation of sacrifice, of death in order to, shall we say, repair the damage. To meet the situation which had come in.

A covering was demanded. I'm not going into all the details. Not possible to do that.

Simply states the fact there's a lot behind it. A covering is demanded. And that covering is provided through death.

The death of those animals who provided the skin. Most probably if the rest of scripture is to be taken as giving meaning to this it was lamb's skin and their skins providing this covering. There's a vast amount of the Bible gathered into that.

But you will realize at once how full and how rich it is when you are reminded that the word which runs right through the whole Bible atonement means covering. The very word itself means covering. And when God clothed and covered he signified that atonement was necessary and was the way back to the glory.

Or for the recovering of the glory. Now there's a very interesting and instructive allusion to this at the other end of the Bible. Go right through to the book of the Revelation and you turn to chapter 3 and verse 16 Because thou art lukewarm neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth because thou sayest I am rich and have gotten riches and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire that thou mayest become rich and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest That would suggest that the physical nakedness of Genesis 3.21 is but a symbol of spiritual nakedness.

And if the white garments which throughout the whole of the Bible are symbolic of righteousness are the covering of the nakedness then it is perfectly clear that this nakedness was a state of unrighteousness which had got to be covered and to be covered with the garments of righteousness. So here you have the whole work of atonement covering which is the putting away of a state of spiritual nakedness that is unrighteousness and the placing in its place of the covering the garments of righteousness. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saint.

All this and of course heaps more gathered just into this very simple indication that God made an atonement in principle in type immediately the glory was withdrawn. A covering by sacrifice by death a

covering for a strict naked bare condition as before him. And remember it is in that direction that this thing has its real seriousness.

There was not another man, woman or child in the garden to behold these two. No one else to see their nakedness. It was only God.

Only God. And so to principle you see this is all a matter of how we stand before God. It is God in Christ challenging Laodicea about this nakedness.

It's how we are in the sight of God. Not first how we appear before men. We may be making artificial covering before men and pretending covering up and making believe and deceiving them but we can't do that before God.

Christ was very true to principle always even in his illustrations. And then he put words into the mouth of the repentant conscience stricken prodigal son who made him say Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. That's a tremendous principle that covers all the ages.

Not just I have sinned against other people or I have sinned against myself. Sin and unrighteousness is something that strikes at God because it strikes at God's very intention in making man and sin therefore strikes at the very purpose of man's creation. It's against God.

It's against heaven. But isn't it a very blessed thing to see that although it is against God and the nakedness is open and bare to God it is God that takes the action to cover it. And so God himself introduced in person the function of the altar and the priest.

If it would not be misunderstood I would say that God became the first active priest. He took this matter in hand. And is not this a part of that which is included in the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Here you are right at the beginning of creation. And the lamb is slain there to cover to cover this departure of righteousness which always involves the departure of glory. So we come to the altar and the priest in this first section and can only note it in general for the detail is too much.

Interesting perhaps just to note that in these five books these first five books of the Bible the word altar itself occurs no fewer than 88 times. That's impressive. That's impressive.

And then you find in all the outstanding characters on God's side the altar has a place. It evidently has a place with Abel. Although it's not mentioned that he put his offering upon an altar it is clearly shown that both he and Cain offered in some way and they must have had something that corresponded to an altar so that we can say that the altar was there with Abel in his blood sacrifice.

It is there and mentioned definitely with Noah. Noah builded an altar. Again with Abraham it is very much in view in his life more than once and with Moses.

How much the altar is in view of the 88 times to which I have referred by far the greater number are connected with the life and work of Moses. I'm only pointing out that in this first section the predominant idea is the altar. The figure of the cross.

And it is an emphasis upon this that right in the first place where the glory has been covered has been sustained it is the cross in symbol and type that is brought so fully into view as the way of dealing with that and opening a path for the glory again. So we have to look at the the altar or the cross the function of the

altar and as you know most of you do and I'm always this time bearing in mind that there are those who don't know as others do what is in the Bible. The cross or its representation in the old dispensation the altar the altar has a double sign a double meaning.

On the one side it sets off the consuming from the presence of God of that which is incapable of being accepted by him and being glorified. Sacrifice was brought in that dispensation and in a symbolic act the offerer laid his hands upon the head of the sacrifice and by so doing in Christ transferred himself and his sin to that sacrifice. Declared as he laid his hands upon that sacrifice that he was a sinner and that being a sinner he merited judgment and death at the hand of God.

As a sinner he had no standing with God no acceptance with God no place with God. His only hope was that he as a sinner with his sin should be put out of the way. That's one half only one half but that is the half.

And so with the transference of himself and his sin to that offering it was consumed wholly upon the altar, nothing left but ashes consumed from the presence of God. That is one side of the meaning of the cross of Christ as we know. We haven't grasped it yet.

We really have not apprehended that yet. We are not in the good of that yet. Only in part.

But that is it stands as the one side consumed from God by transmission of sin to the offering. There is the other side. Consumed unto God because this offering must in itself be without fault or blemish, without sin.

In itself it must be perfect and because God sees that side of the offering it is not annihilation. There is prospect. See dear friends if you and I as we are, took that place on the cross then nothing would come back.

Nothing would survive. That would be the end forever of every vestige of us. We would be blotted right out and there would be no afterwards.

But because the sacrifice was perfect without fault, without blemish, while it took on itself the sin in itself it was not sinful. Therefore there is another side and there can be that which comes back. Well of course you see Christ at once.

The sin bearer got the sinless sin bearer and while in that representative capacity as the sinner he was consumed from God as indicated in that terrible moment when he sensed his God forsakenness and said my God thou hast forsaken me why hast thou forsaken me and as consumed from the presence of God in the place of sinful man on the other hand that's done that's done and the same person is heard in the last breath saying into thy hands father into thy hands I commend myself. It's all done it's all over that side and now he can commend himself to God. I think he's the only one in this universe who has a right to use that word.

I notice, I notice of course it's inadvertent and unintentional but those of us who are rather finicky about words notice things. I so often hear people say Lord we commend ourselves to your care, to you and so on. No we don't.

We commit ourselves. There's nothing about us to be commended to God. We can't commend ourselves.

There's no commendation for everything. But he could commend himself to God. Not only commit well that by the way it sounds pedantic don't worry but you see he could do that because with another side to him well here the consuming unto God just as utterly and completely as the altar fire consumed the sacrifice to the last bit away from God so it consumed unto God that which was according to God's mind and by the transmission of sin to the sacrifice it was cut off from God so by the remission of sin it is brought unto God.

The function of the altar is that twofold much more than that of course but I just say with that this morning. The function of the priest. The function of the priest.

What was that and what is that? It is gathered into one word. Intercession. Intercession.

We are using the word mediation. It means the same thing. Now intercession dear friends has a wider meaning than just praying.

We have reduced the meaning of intercession to praying. Think that praying is all that intercession means. Well praying is only a part of intercession.

Intercession is something very much more than praying for one another. It means coming and standing right in between and taking responsibility for both. The word in the Old Testament is a very much stronger word.

It is a very strong word. It means to fall apart. There is one occasion when it is used where intercession was made to the king.

In a certain matter intercession was made unto the king. The word means, and it gives us a very vivid picture, a person has come and told himself oh king here is the situation. Here is the situation.

He is throwing apart. Difficult to describe but that is the word that is used. It just means to throw apart.

If you get into the Old Testament intercession you will find that it wasn't just men standing up and offering prayers on behalf of other people. They have come right into a situation and they have fallen upon God. They have cast themselves upon God over that situation.

They themselves are in between as a matter of life and death in these two parts of the case. The need and the supply. The helpless and the helpless.

Intercession is not just passive prayer and asking. In these two parts of the case the need and the supply. The helpless and the helpless.

Intercession is not just passive prayer and asking for ourselves or for others. Intercession is nothing merely official. A priest is not just an official with God who performs certain rites and reads certain prayers.

No. It's not official. It certainly is not professional.

Something that you are paid to do. Because you belong to a priestly order. No.

Intercession which is the function of the priest is personal responsibility for the situation that exists. A stepping right into it. You have several very vivid illustrations of this in this first section of the Bible.

You can just take out one from the book of Numbers chapter 16. Remember that it says people murmured against Moses and Aaron. They'd done it so often and they'd only just done it very seriously and

grievously and now they're doing it again and the Lord says to Moses get out of the way.

Stand aside. Let me destroy this people. I'll destroy this people.

And Moses falls on his face and then he says to Aaron, the priest take a censer. Take fire from the altar. Put it in the censer and go in amongst the people.

And Aaron did so and as he went in it says the plague had already begun. People were dying. And Aaron moved between the dead and the living with his fire from the altar and so the plague was stayed.

That intercession getting in between the dead and the living. Very vivid illustration of priesthood isn't it? And the function of priesthood in turn. Now you notice as introductory to that very episode it says the glory appeared in the door of the tavern.

The glory appeared. Here the glory appeared against rebellion. Against this thing which had risen up.

Contrary to God. And it was testifying to the fact that this this, this can never, never come into the realm of the glory. The glory is against this.

The glory is against this. Therefore it must be dealt with. It must be put out of the way.

It must be consumed. And unless a covering is made, total destruction will take place. And the fire from the altar provided the atonement so that the glory was not unto destruction but the atonement kept the way open for these people to live and not die.

And the plague was stayed. So we see the shadow of the cross. Christ is both sacrifice and priest.

Both sacrifice and priest. Well you need not that I enlarge upon that I'm quite sure. God is the God of glory.

And as such he comes down to man through the sacrifice and the priest. Through the cross. And the one who offers himself unto God.

On the one side made sin for us. He who knew no sin. On the other side offering himself without blemish unto God.

And so the way of the glory is opened up. I put a note about the conservation of values. I don't think I can take the time to dwell upon those but it's quite clear that while these are types, these are figures, these are symbols in the Old Testament they carry on something.

They carry on something of value to us. I put it like this. You know the Jewish nation the Jewish nation now lying under the judgment of God and having been so for these many centuries, and it's a terrible judgment of God, lies under that judgment not only because of what it did to God's Son Jesus Christ, but because of what in their doing to Jesus Christ they did in relation to the whole of their history of sacrifices.

That upon this generation is the word may come the blood from Abel to Zechariah whom they slew between the horns of the oxen. The whole story of the whole history of sacrifice from Abel right to the end of the Old Testament was gathered into their act against Jesus Christ because he summarized the whole, but they were accounted responsible for Abel's blood for the blood of every sacrifice all the way through the Old Testament. No wonder their judgment is so terrible.

All that the values from Abel onward were carried forward into Christ. But look around the other way where there has been faith as in Abel, as in Norm, as in Abraham. Faith in relation to this work of the altar, of the sacrifice of the blood that is attributed to those men in Christ.

I'm not one of those people who believe that the Old Testament saints have no place in the new dispensation. I believe their faith in the symbolic sacrifice meant as much or now means as much to them as our faith in the real sacrifice means. They, says the apostle, without us could not be made complete.

Which is a clear implication that with us they are made complete and it's their faith. It's the conservation and transmission of these values. It's not all an Old Testament story that has passed forever.

It's been carried on both ways now. You and I are going to be responsible for the Old Testament in this sense that we've got a vast document which says that God has intervened in the history of this world all the way through with an atonement. An atonement to save us.

He's done it. So the things that were written before time were written for our learning. Well, what does it all mean? The atonement, the covering, is a renewed giving effect to God's original purpose.

It's God coming back and saying the purpose stands. The purpose of glory holds good and by this means we give effect to it. We ratify it.

We confirm it by the cross, by the sacrifice, by the mediation, by the altar, by the priesthood. In spiritual meaning and value we are only setting our hand to the fact that we've not given up the original intention. We are going however, whatever it means, we are going to have the glory.

We are going to have the glory. And the atonement or the cross if you like, is rather a ratification of the original purpose of God than anything else. Shall we pass for a few minutes to this next section? Only a few minutes I think.

Authority and the glory. Joshua to the book of Esther. It's a long, long stretch.

A lot in it and we are not going to attempt to take up all those books but just to seek to summarize the message. Here again you've only got a glance of a concordance to see what a large place the altar has in this section in relation to what comes in with this new section from Joshua right on to the book of Esther. That is the matter of authority.

The book of Joshua brings in a new feature. Up to this point it has been Moses and the function of Moses or the work of Moses was the leading out of a people, the formation of that people into a nation, the instruction of that people as to the things of God and the establishing of the mediatorial system. That was all the work of Moses and what he was called to do.

And when that is done his service is finished and he is taken. Joshua his successor comes in and brings in a new phase of things. Now the function and the work is conquest and dominion.

And that necessitates another phase of ministry. This means the work of subduing a whole realm of antagonism, of possessing a whole realm of covenant promise, and of ruling in that realm. That is what covers this whole section of the Bible.

Subduing, possessing, ruling. And that all necessitates authority. And the fact that it is a necessity, that this thing has got to be done, there's got to be a subduing and a ruling that itself implies that there's a

system of things that is contrary.

And that being so, there can be no glory until that is dealt with and brought under. Until there is a subduing of a whole world of antagonism to God's mind, there can be no glory. A lot of people have found difficulty, if you come up against this difficulty at any time, let me say this word to you.

Difficulty in understanding that God could be such a God as He is and command that utter conflict wiping out and destruction of nations, even to the little children. Now, I could spend some time in dealing with that, and if I did so, I don't think you would have any ground left for any argument at all. You would say, God was done.

All history has disclosed. And investigation has made abundantly manifest that such a state of iniquity beyond all description existed amongst those nations, that almost every infant was impregnated with venereal disease. Forgive me even you mentioning but such a state of violence, of violence, the violation of every moral law and every decency existed.

So that their very religion was founded upon moral iniquity. That a very temple could have two thousand priestesses if every one of which was a prostitute. Is God justified in wiping that out? Can't that any fragment of it be to His glory? Now, I could give you the data for that but you don't want one.

You better have said God of righteousness commanding the destruction of people wholesale like that. Dear friends, dear friends, you and I know enough about ourselves without without all that to say the only thing that rightly should be done with me is that I should be wiped out. Ever come there? No.

I put it in this way and I mean it. I mean what I say. These are not my words.

There are times when we could apologize to God for having a being but we know ourselves. That's no exaggeration. At any rate, if you don't feel like that I have often felt like that.

Master Lord, forgive me for being alive at all, such a creature as I am. Well, there you are. That cannot be glorified.

They had the opportunity. They had the opportunity to repent. They knew.

Ray had one of the countless harlots of the land was right at the very gateway of the land and she told the spies that they had heard all that God had done for their deliverance from Egypt and what the Lord had done with them again and again. They knew in the land all about it. They could have repented.

The Gibeonites themselves confessed, confessed that they knew God was with his people and they resorted to a subterfuge to evade their own destruction because they knew, they knew what God's attitude was toward them and their country. They could have repented. They chose not to.

And it was not destruction without opportunity. Well, forgive all that. Terrible, terrible.

But we've got to not be superficial about these things. We've got to justify God. And if that's a terrible parenthesis, it only emphasizes this new phase of things.

There's got to be a subduing. There's got to be established a government. A rule that will give no place to anything like that.

There's got to come in authority and men have got to recognize it. So in principle it came in with Joshua. And the altar here takes on this extra feature.

This extra feature. The principle of kingship is introduced, although the person is not yet mentioned by that name or title. Joshua in principle was there.

And it shows that the principle was already recognized, although the title or name was not used. Because the book of Judges follows the book of Joshua. Close on.

Indeed it overlaps. You look at the beginning of the book of Judges, you find it overlaps, the book of Joshua. And there the book of Judges says, every man did that which was right in his own eyes, because there was no king.

There was no king. Well, Joshua introduces then the principle of authority. And that book shows what is possible when authority is established.

My word is the testimony of the book of Joshua to what tremendous things can be when there is a central government. A central authority. Now it was conquest.

It was victory. It was subduing. It was possessing.

It was exploiting. But the book of Judges follows immediately as I have said it overlaps. And here all we can say about it is as one of the most terrible books in the whole Bible, it in contrast shows the disasters and the tragedies that come about when there is no central authority.

When the principle of kingship is not there authoritative. It's a terrible story. But Mark you, it's always true.

Always true. In principle. This is the Old Testament way of illustrating great spiritual divine truth.

The principle of kings today as we shall see. The little book of Ruth overlaps Judges or is written as depicting some interlude in the tragedies of the book of Judges written right in the situation now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled. And that's the book of Ruth.

But in the midst of it all God reacting to this state without authority, without government without kingship. God reacting and in the little book of Ruth the king coming into view Boaz and Ruth and David. God reacting to lawlessness in this beautiful, quiet sovereign way to bring in his king.

So this whole section in the first place presents us with the call for authority.

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