

The Heavenly Calling - Part 5

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the transition from the old covenant of Israel to the new spiritual Israel established through Jesus Christ, emphasizing His role as the Lamb of God and the significance of being born again.

Duration: 50:42

Scripture: Exodus 12:1-14, Matthew 6:33, John 1:1-3, John 1:29, John 2:13-22, Hebrews 4:16

Topics: "Heavenly Calling"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by emphasizing the importance of God's Son in the new movement of God to the heavenly Israel. He then discusses Jesus as the Lamb of God, highlighting Nicodemus as a representative of the old Israel. The speaker emphasizes the privileges and open access to God's grace that the new dispensation offers. The sermon also touches on the account of the marriage in Cana and Jesus' actions in the temple, where he declares that his body is the temple that will be raised up in three days.

Transcript

We are continuing in the way of this great matter, which the Lord has sought to bring before us for these days. This evening we are going to lift out of the whole of this matter one section, but let me remind you of the all-governing truth which we are considering. It is what God is doing in this dispensation in which we live.

We must be perfectly clear as to what it is that God is particularly doing at this time in the world's history. Therefore, what it is that we who are the Lord are called into. The thing that God is doing in this dispensation is the formation of a spiritual and heavenly Israel.

And in doing that, he is repeating the laws of the old Israel in a spiritual way. He is following along the lines of his ways with the old Israel, but now on a heavenly basis and not an earthly. He has left the earthly basis of the old testament and has moved on to a heavenly basis in the new.

He has moved from the temporal to the spiritual, and the spiritual is far greater than the temporal. Now we are going to see this tonight in the gospel by John. This gospel is all one with the letter to the Hebrews because it is just a part of the whole thing that the new testament represents.

But John's gospel is the embodiment of this matter of the spiritual Israel in a very wonderful way. There are two things so clear in this gospel. One is the Jewish background of the gospel.

The other is the spiritual background behind the Jewish. And that spiritual background in this gospel is being brought to the front. And it is being made the ground for the whole dispensation.

Well, let us look at this. I don't know how far we shall get in this hour. I have sixteen marks of the Jewish background of this gospel by John.

But I promise you that I will just keep to the time. And we will just take as many as is possible this evening. But we note in the first place that once again as in the letter to the Hebrews the introduction and presentation is of God's Son.

In the new movement of God to the heavenly Israel His Son stands right at the door. And we are all familiar with this wonderful presentation of God's Son at the beginning of John's gospel. In the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made that had been made. And there is more to it than that as you see.

The point is that God has founded the dispensation upon His Son. God's Son is the governing factor in this whole dispensation. Now we go on to what I have called the Jewish background of Christ.

And the first feature of these sixteen which I have before me is Jesus as the Lamb of God. Verse 29 of chapter 1 On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Verse 36 And he looked upon Jesus as he walked and saith Behold the Lamb of God.

Now we know that the whole Jewish system was built around the Passover Lamb. The Lamb was the very basis of everything in Israel. The Passover Lamb was the constitution of them as a nation.

And the Passover Lamb was the greatest governmental factor in all their history. It would be impossible to count the lambs that were offered in Israel through those many centuries. There would have been many millions of lambs slain.

There would have been an ocean of blood from all those lambs. And now John beholdeth Jesus and says The Lamb. This is God's Lamb.

Behold the Lamb of God. Distinguishing Jesus. Marking him out as the unique Lamb.

The one Lamb toward which all the millions of lambs have ever pointed. And just as the Passover Lamb was the foundation of the old earthly Israelite So we know that this Lamb of God is the very foundation of our whole Christian life. He is the foundation of this dispensation.

In that Passover night in the upper room in Jerusalem Jesus laid the foundation of the church for this dispensation in the Passover. And while there are other features of the church's life The central feature is the table of the Lord. Everything centers in that table.

Everything gathers around that table. Everything issues from that table. If you had gone into any assembly of the Lord's people in any part of the world in New Testament times You might have found different things in different assemblies.

But you would have found one thing that was the same in every assembly. And that was the Lord's table. The Lamb of God at the center of everything.

We only make the statement this evening. And note that right from the very beginning God takes up the principle of the old and makes it the spiritual reality of the new. That which was earthly and temporal in the old Israel is now heavenly and spiritual in the new Israel.

That is the first thing about the Jewish background leading to the heavenly foreground. Now we look again at chapter 1 of John. At verse 43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee And he findeth Philip And Jesus said unto him Follow me Now Philip was from Bethsaida of the city of Andrew and Peter Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him We have found him Now note We have found him Moses in the law And the prophets did write Jesus of Nazareth The son of Joseph That is the first part of the Jewish background Moses and the prophets But we go on Nathanael said unto him Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

Philip saith unto him Come and see Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him And saith unto him Behold an Israelite Indeed In whom is no guile Nathanael saith unto him Whence knowest thou me?

Jesus answered and said unto him Before Philip called thee When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee Nathanael answered him Rabbi thou art the Son of God Thou art the King of Israel Jesus answered and said unto him Because I said unto thee I saw thee underneath the fig tree Believest thou Thou shalt see greater things than thee He saith unto him Verily, verily I say unto you Ye shall see the heaven opened And the angels of God ascending and descending Upon the Son of Man Do you need to have it pointed out that there's quite a lot of Jewish Old Testament in that section Moses and the prophets Jacob and his ladder It's all there But Jesus is saying There's a transition from that old to a new And that transition is in myself The prophets and Moses speak of me And the new Israel is

centered in myself The Israel that is not the Jacob in which there is guile But the really deep thought and truth in this part Concerns the closed and the open heaven When Jesus said to Nathanael Thou shalt see the heaven opened He was pointing to an entirely new dispensation The one characteristic of the Old Testament Jewish system was a closed heaven You know that it was on pain of death That any man came into the presence of God in the old dispensation What a terrible place that was, that mountain where God was Thunders and lightnings and earthquakes That even Moses said I do exceedingly fear and quake And so terrible was the sound that the people doth not draw near That even if a beast touched the mountain it died The whole of that system of that dispensation was keep out Come in here

where God is and you will die Jacob said I feel God, I must die A closed heaven, no way for the people into the presence of God Everything said stay out, people knew that It was a terrible thing to come into the presence of God It just meant death The high priest had to have very special provision to go into the most holy place And in making that provision God said lest he die So the Jewish system was a system of judgment and death A system of the closed heaven No way through for man But said Jesus you shall see the heaven open And the way between heaven and earth between God and man made clear And I am that way By my own blood I will open heaven Therefore we can come to him by the new and living way which he hath made for us in his blood Jesus said I am the way, no man cometh to the

father but by me So that the second Jewish feature is a closed heaven And the second feature of the new Israel is an open heaven And we are enjoying that tonight We do not stand outside in fear and trembling Wondering whether peradventure we dare draw nigh We can come with boldness to the throne of grace Oh this new dispensation is a better one This new Israel has privileges which the old never had That is what God is doing in this dispensation He has done it in his son And many many who have been shut out are now finding their way in God has provided for all an open way in his son Jesus Christ We pass into chapter 2 of John's Gospel And in the first eleven verses which we will not read We have the account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee You all know or should know the story There was

a marriage in Cana of Galilee The mother of Jesus was there Jesus also was bidden and his disciples to the marriage And then the wine failed Mother of Jesus said to him they have no wine Jesus put her back said mine hour has not yet come Mother of Jesus said to the servants whatsoever he says unto you do it Then when Jesus knew in his heart that the father's time had come And that was a very important factor Remember that Jesus would never move on any ground whatsoever But the knowledge that his father wanted him to move And he waited for that When he knew in his heart that the father said yes go on He said to the servants fill the water pots with water And they filled them up to the brim He said draw out now and bear to the ruler of the feast And they drew out and bear unto the ruler of

the feast When the ruler of the feast tasted the water Now become wine And knew not whence it was But the servants which had drawn the water knew The ruler of the feast call it the bridegroom He said unto him every man set it on first the good wine And when men have drunk freely Then that which is washed Thou hast kept the good wine until now Now where is the Jewish background We said yesterday morning at the Lord's table That the Lord's table amongst other things Was the time when the Lord instituted his marriage with his people In the Old Testament it was a marriage covenant that was made in the Passover Jeremiah referred to that when in chapter 31 and verse 31 He spoke of the day when the Lord took them by the hand And became a husband unto them And that was on the Passover night Now

Jesus knew what he was doing at Cana Oh how many times we have heard people talk about Jesus being of a social disposition And therefore he of course was quite happy to attend marriages That might be true But that is not the meaning here But that is not the meaning of this story here Jesus always acted on The marriage between God and Israel Israel had broken down Israel had violated the terms of the covenant of marriage with Jehovah Israel had, as the prophets said, become an adulterous nation They had gone unto other gods And they had broken their covenant with the Lord And the marriage broke down Here you have it in Cana in figure I don't know what was going on behind this But we can judge from a lot of other things That God was behind this failure of the wine Because of the spiritual

significance the wine just had to fail It represented the old marriage relationship which had broken down It had come to an end There had got to be a new marriage And there had got to be a new marriage supper of the Lamb One had broken down The salvation of the marriage relationship between God and his people is in Jesus only It was he who saved the situation here And everybody knew that something very wonderful and supernatural had happened This was not natural This was not earthly This was heavenly This was spiritual This was supernatural So is that marriage relationship between Christ and his church There is a movement from the old Israel who has failed and been put aside to a new Israel Which lives by this life of Jesus Christ We look again at the next thing This is number four in the

series Verse thirteen of chapter two Note again And the Passover of the Jews was at night And Jesus went up to Jerusalem And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves And the

changers of money sitting He made a scourge of cords and cast all out of the temple both the sheep and the oxen He poured out the changers money and overthrew their tables And to them that sold the doves he said Take these things hence Make not my father's house a house of merchandise His disciples remembered that it was written The zeal of thine house shall eat me up Now note particularly The Jews therefore answered and said unto him What sign showest thou unto us seeing thou doest these things Jesus answered and said unto them Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up Jesus

answered and said The Jews therefore said Forty and six years was this temple in building And wilt thou raise it up in three days But he spake of the temple of his body When therefore he was raised from the dead His disciples remembered that he spake this No need to point out the Jewish background The Jewish background occupies the temple at its center The temple in Jerusalem For them that temple represented everything Jesus speaks of the destroying of that temple And Jesus speaks to them of the destroying of that temple Jesus said I am the temple of the new dispensation I am going to take the place of this old temple And I am going to be all that that temple represented But in a fuller and better way Was the temple the place where men thought that they would meet God Men will meet God in

me in a more real way than that Was the temple the place to which people went to be taught about God They will learn more about God in me than ever they learned in that temple Was the temple the place where men went to worship God It will be in me that men will come into touch with God for worship And that leads us to that wonderful revelation which we have in the New Testament The revelation of Christ and all his members being made one temple for God Christ is our temple In him we find all that ever a temple was intended to be Oh how people have gone astray about this I go to many places that are called churches And the word is applied to the building And when you hear people praying in those places They usually put it something like this We have come into thy house today We are glad to

be in this place, the house of God And they are talking about the building My dear friends, you don't need a special building to give God a temple Where so ever two or three are gathered into my name, there I am People gathered into Jesus Christ constitute the temple of God It is not a special building, it is people who are in Christ Jesus This is what God is doing in this dispensation And you know a lot of people have lost their special buildings Quite a lot are not allowed to meet in special buildings But they are gathering in two or three in some place hidden away And they are enjoying all the privileges of the house of God Because the Lord is there No, the temple now is Christ and those who are in union with him So he said in this way which they didn't understand Destroy this temple

and in three days I will raise it up Christ in resurrection is the temple of this dispensation I wonder if inside of Christ he was smiling when he said that He knew that he was just tripping them up He knew what they would say Forty and six years was this temple building It looked as though he had deliberately misled them But he was leading on to the nature of this new dispensation That's only number four out of sixteen I have ten minutes left and I will just take another one Chapter three and everybody knows John chapter three Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus A ruler of the Jews And you know the rest of the story of Nicodemus I will not read it all now But what have we got here in Nicodemus Surely we have a representative of the old Israel He is of the sect of the

Pharisees And they claim to be very representative And he is a ruler of the Jews So that he is indeed Israel in representation He is a son of Abraham after the flesh He is the embodiment of the seed of Abraham after the flesh What does the Lord Jesus say to him In effect he says to him You a son of Abraham An inclusive representation of the children of Abraham after the flesh You an embodiment of

Israel I look upon you Nicodemus As all the seed of Abraham after the flesh represented I look upon you Nicodemus as all Israel present here tonight in you And Nicodemus in that representative capacity You must be born again The seed of Abraham after the flesh Does not stand in the kingdom of God You know that is Paul's argument in his letters to the Romans and the Galatians They are not all

Israel which are after Israel There is a natural seed and there is a spiritual seed And Jesus was saying to Nicodemus in his representative capacity The natural seed of Abraham doesn't stand Israel after the flesh is no more You must be born again There must be a seed after the spirit In other words there must be a new spiritual heavenly Israel That which is born of the flesh is flesh And there shall no flesh stand before God That which is born of the spirit is spirit Therefore I said unto you, you must be born again The new Israel of this dispensation is the Israel of the born from above ones These are not sons of Abraham but they are sons of God We are back at chapter one But to them that believed He gave the right to become the sons of God The great deal of difference between Children

of Abraham after the flesh and children of God after the spirit And it is not only a great difference It is an improved species Altogether a higher race A heavenly people Well with number five we must close tonight And go on perhaps if the Lord wills tomorrow night And see if we can get nearer to six feet

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