

Ye Are Come to Zion - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Zion as a collective conception of the Lord's people together with the Lord, where there is a mutuality of life in the Lord, and encourages the listener to live in the good of Zion and experience the blessing and satisfaction of God.

Duration: 36:35

Scripture: Genesis 1:31, Genesis 2:15, Psalm 87:2, Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 11:4, Hebrews 11:26, Hebrews 12:22

Topics: "Zion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the message being shared during their gatherings. They express concern that the teachings should not just be ideas or concepts, but rather a deep and meaningful exercise before the Lord. The speaker highlights the need for a crisis-like urgency in delivering the message that is relevant to the current times. They emphasize that Zion, representing something precious, cannot be obtained easily and should be cherished and protected. The sermon concludes with a reference to the book of Revelation, where a lamb is seen on Mount Zion, symbolizing complete victory through the blood of Jesus.

Transcript

Twelfth chapter, the letter to the Hebrews, verse twenty-two. Ye are come unto Mount Zion. Yesterday we were mainly occupied with that aspect of the heritage of faith, which is found in the spiritual counterpart to what God gave to man in the creation.

We saw that God himself took in hand to bring into being a world for his own satisfaction and pleasure, concerning which he could say without any reserve, it is very good. And having completed that, he put man into it and made it man's inheritance. The counterpart of that is found in the first two chapters of the letter to the Hebrews, the letter beginning as the book of Genesis begins with God.

Then the working out of a whole scheme and plan of redemption and new creation in Christ and through Christ, the second chapter of the letter, and the second chapter of Genesis brings man on the scene, God is man. Thou shouldst put him over the works of thy hand, thou madest him in order to have dominion over the works of thy hand. So that the believer is brought into something that God has comprehensively consummated in his Son.

It is the heritage of faith. Now we are not spending any time on that aspect. Last evening we moved on to the second phase, where Israel comes into the picture and again the whole matter of a heritage is in view, offers to faith.

That stage and phase is arrived at with the extra word in this clause. Firstly, ye are cup, and that applies to what God has offered to us in Christ. This marvellous new position with its marvellous new inheritance as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Then it follows, ye are come to Zion, and we were saying that Zion is an inclusive and comprehensive conception. Zion really comprehensively means that in which God's full salvation and purpose is found. That is Christ and a people who are joined to him partaking of the values of what he is and what he has done.

Zion spiritually interpreted is Christ and his people in all the good of God's perfected redemption and provision. Breaking up that inclusive significance of Zion we went on to see from the history of the earthly Zion the light that it throws upon the spiritual Zion to which we are come. That it is the symbol of his transcendent victory.

As Zion of old represented the great victory of the great king, the greatest king of Israel. It was the stronghold of Zion which stood out against him and tested his strength, his real power as nothing else did. Then he took it and made it his abode, place of his palace.

It therefore symbolised the transcendent victory of the greatest king of the old dispensation. That is carried over spiritually to the Zion to which we are come. This letter to the Hebrews sets forth the strength of that which stands against the Lord in the first place.

Sin, man's own nature, death and him that hath the hold on death, that is the deviant. And in a very few words in this letter to the Hebrews all that is seen to be nullified. He destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the deviant.

And delivered all them who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to poverty. What a triumph! That is Zion. Ye are come to that.

Now we proceed with one or two more features of that to which we are come. By the grace of God and that is offered to us for faith apprehension. Zion as we so well know from many scriptures of the Old Testament became the place of God's dwelling.

Or always represented the place of God's abode. The Lord dwelt in Zion, was represented as dwelling in Zion. The Lord speaks out of Zion.

It is his habitation. Now dear friends we must draw very near to this matter in all its aspects. And not just contemplate it as some set of beautiful ideas, truths, things that are in the Bible.

These are not only grand and glorious truths, doctrines, teachings. They are every one of them a tremendous challenge to us. They are set forth in order to find us out whether we really are children or citizens of Zion.

That is whether these things are true of us. There are great values here for us. And when we speak about Zion.

Remembering all the time that this is Christ and his own. Which we are supposed at least to be. Zion being the Lord's dwelling place.

We touch upon something of tremendous practical importance and value. For you and I know very well that the one thing which perhaps more than anything else governs our interests. Governs our lives.

Is where to find the Lord. Where and how we can find the Lord. You agree that that's an important matter isn't it for us? To be in touch with the Lord.

To know just where we can be sure to find him. That's a very important matter indeed. If we don't know that we are certainly at a loss.

Life will be all awry and confusion. Weak and defeated. If we are not really in touch with the Lord.

Where is the Lord? Now remembering that Zion is a collective conception. It is not just a matter of so many unrelated and unconnected units and individuals. But Zion is always a collective conception in the word of God.

It is the Lord's people together with the Lord. That's Zion. Where there is a mutuality of life in the Lord.

That is where you will find the Lord. I do not mean that the individual cannot find the Lord alone. It can be.

And I do not mean that if you have not possibly, possibly and I must underline that. Facilities of fellowship with the Lord amongst his people. The Lord will not make some special provision.

Will not meet you in some special way. But God's normal way of being found in greater fullness in that measure. Which means everything to his people.

The normal way is the way of Zion. That is the way of spiritual fellowship in Christ. It is absolutely essential to our life.

That we have some kind of relatedness with the people of God. Which brings us into a touch with the Lord. Which is more than that which we can have individually in the past.

To our very life. This is essential. Imperative.

That in some way whether in the location or not. In some way we have a relatedness. A vital connection.

A powerful and positive union. With the people of God. Of a spiritual kind.

On the basis that it is Christ. Not that we are a society who are in existence on some agreed basis. Of either teachings or practices.

But that we are a people based upon Christ. Who is our only concern. It does not matter one little bit about the institution.

About the particular framework. The thing is that we are based upon Christ. And we are a people based upon Christ.

Where Christ is holy and fully apprehended. And honored and exalted. And is recognized and acknowledged as the Son over God's house.

There we shall find the Lord. And we shall find the Lord in a very special way. It will be our testimony if that is true of us.

That whenever it is possible for me to enjoy that fellowship. I somehow or other meet the Lord. And the Lord meets me.

And there is something more of the Lord afterwards than there was before. And marks you everything that the devil can do in earth or hell to stop that he will do. By every trick and cunning and device and fury he will prevent you from that fellowship.

He will keep you away from that. Somehow he will just see to it. If he possibly can.

That you will not get there. You will not get there. And dear friends over this whole matter there is such a need for vigilance.

Oh how pained we often are. And we know that such and such need the time of fellowship. They are in desperate need of it.

Their spiritual life is crying out for it. And then they decide under a move of the Lord in their hearts. To take advantage of the opportunity.

And then through lack of sufficient positiveness and godfulness. Some little thing arises. Some circumstance.

Some trick. Something happens. And they accept it that they are not to be there after all.

Oh there is to be a fight over this matter. This is not going to be had cheaply. Zion is always represented as something very precious.

Perhaps to speak about that at another time in another connection. As something very precious. But you don't get precious things cheaply.

They just do not fall to you. You've got to be prepared to pay a price for precious things. We are not talking about salvation now.

We are talking about this heritage of faith. And if there is one thing that this letter to the Hebrews makes clear and emphasizes is that these men in that great caravan from Abel onward toward the inheritance. One thing that characterized them was their persistence.

Their determination not to be robbed of the inheritance. Whoever it was. Abel let his blood be shed.

Abram left out of the crisis. Moses left Egypt behind with all its pleasures and learning. These men counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than those of Egypt.

They recognized the tremendous importance of Zion in principle. And therefore fought for it. Let everything else go for it.

And to find the Lord in this way we are going to have to be very very positive in our attitude. Over this matter of relatedness and fellowship. And don't make any mistake about it dear friends.

If the devil can by any way hook or crook destroy the values of related life in Christ. He will do it. And he knows what he is up to.

He will mar the glory of Zion if he can. That has always been his object. So where shall we find the Lord? Yes we find him in our own room alone.

Praise God. Yes we'll find him far away there in some remote place where we have no Christian fellowship. The Lord will meet us.

But we must not even so, even so as individuals or in remote places accept that we are unrelated. That we are just individuals. Let us remember that Zion is one.

And we belong to Zion. And we are not all Zion. Either individually or in local companies we are not all Zion.

Zion is something very much bigger than that. Then a further thing about Zion was and is that in the old literal presentation, representation. Zion was the seat of government, the place of the throne.

The place of the throne. Here in this letter to the Hebrews you make that tremendous move. Almost in one clogs.

Tasting, having tasted death. On behalf of every man move to heaven. Sit down at the right hand of the majesty.

Waiting. And here come, here come to the throne. The government.

Christ and a heavenly people. Note this. Become the governmental seat and instrument of the Lord.

Zion is a governmental conception. His throne is in Zion. He rules from Zion.

His sovereignty operates in relation to Zion. That is only saying in figurative language. That when the Lord, when the Lord has something after this time that satisfies his heart according to his Son, Jesus Christ.

God is tremendously jealous about that. And puts his sovereignty, his sovereignty into action in relation to that. It is there that his throne is.

It may not always appear to be like that according to our human ideas of sovereignty and government. It may sometimes seem that the enemy is on the throne. It may sometimes appear as though the Lord has really vacated his throne.

The Lord is not looking after things. Though, don't make any mistake about it, it has been like that many times in the history of the church. It just seemed as though the devil and his kingdom were running riot.

And swallowing up everything that was of the Lord so that what was of Christ seemed to have disappeared in what we call the dark ages. That's a faith. That passes.

When the Lord comes back, he comes back to greater fullness than he had before. The Lord never does vacate his throne. The Lord never does give up Zion.

The story of Zion in the old dispensation is a marvelous story, isn't it? Of God refusing to give it up. Yes, it may fall on bad days. Enemies may overrun the land.

But God doesn't give up. Through a dark, long period of seventy years, it looks as though nothing has happened. But God comes back for Zion's sake.

And he acts again. He does not give up. And his sovereignty is marvelously at work in relation to Zion.

And that in itself is something that could occupy all the time that we have. To see how God sovereignly and secretly works in his sovereignty in relation to Zion. Do we desire to have the Lord really and ultimately and supremely on our side? Do we want to be related to the throne, the sovereignty, the government of the Lord, the mighty providential over rulings of the Lord in relation to an end which he is seeking? Do we? Where is the place of his throne? It is centered in Zion.

It is there which is the focal point, that is the focal point of the Lord's real concern and the real determination of God to have what his heart is set upon. You are recalling probably some of those words from the prophets of this matter. When Zion had sinned to be eclipsed, Oh, the Lord comes back.

The Lord comes back. You know in chapter 62 of Isaiah's prophecies, which we may consider more fully at some time, it is the Messiah who is speaking. It is the Messiah who is speaking.

And the Messiah says, For Zion's sake will I not hold my feet. For Zion's sake will I not take rest. Until, until, until.

This is the Lord speaking. I will not take rest. I will not cease.

He comes back to Zion. Do you really want to be in line with the movements of God, not secretly but very positively toward his end, ruling and overruling and bringing all life affairs under that sovereign providential government? Then have your heart in Zion. You will find that it will work out like that.

It will work out like that. You do not see it perhaps in the stages but with the long view. You come to an end of a long period and look back and you will have to say, Had it not been the Lord that was on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quite.

Had it not been for the Lord, this is something, this is something which can only be attributed to God. Yes, the Lord is jealous in his sovereignty for Zion. His throne is there.

In a word, Christ, Christ is going to be vindicated. We can say he has been vindicated, that he is going to be fully and finally vindicated. His life, his death are going to be vindicated up to the hill in the end.

Oh yes, it is wonderful, isn't it? It is wonderful. You see the two bounds of Zion in the word. As we pointed out yesterday, the first reference to Zion came on that victorious side of the Red Sea.

Victory, yes, victory over Herod, his hosts of Egypt. Mighty victory. Then they sang the psalm.

And in the psalm they spoke of Zion. The beginning of the journey, but Zion there, right at the beginning, took up the note of victory. The note of the Lord's absolute sovereignty.

Egypt exhausts herself and Herod resorts to his final device. And in the great sea the Lord will bury the lot. That's victory.

And out of that victory, Zion comes into view. Zion comes into view. I think it is very wonderful.

What is the last mention of Zion? The 14th chapter of the book of the Revelation. And I saw a lamb upon Mount Zion. A lamb upon Mount Zion.

Now that Red Sea victory was based upon the lamb of the Passover. It was the victory of the lamb. Worked out.

Here at the end of the whole Bible and the whole story it is the lamb upon Mount Zion. Victory, complete victory through His blood. This is sovereignty.

It's good to take final visions, isn't it? Final pictures, final representations. How is it going to be in the end? How will it really be like at last? Not how is it today, but how will it all work out? What will be the final and ultimate conclusion to the whole matter? A lamb upon Mount Zion. That's the picture.

It will be like that, dear friends, however other we may be feeling about it today. It will be like that at the end. But that is presented to faith.

Ye are come. Ye are come to that absolute sovereignty of the lamb upon Mount Zion. Ye are come to Zion.

And then one more thing which we have already mentioned. That is Zion was the focal point of fellowship. Fellowship on the basis of Christ.

But what was the nature of fellowship in that dispensation as based upon and centred in Zion? It's in one little phrase. Zion, the city of our solemnities. And what were the solemnities? They were the feasts.

It could be rightly translated, the city of our feasts. The place where we come together and have a good time. Oh, how they longed to go up to Zion.

How they lived all the year round for the time to go up to Zion. How Zion, whenever it was thought of and remembered, just lifted the heart. Even away in Babylon, how can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? The songs of Zion.

And to think about Zion was a lift far away. It brought this sense of festivity. Festivity.

Dear friends, there surely ought to be a little more of this about us, don't you think so? That our coming to the Lord Jesus. All that he has done for us and offered to us. All that he has brought us into, placed us in.

All this that Zion means as a spiritual inheritance for us, we ought to be a people of a more festive character. Not superficially, emotionally, excitable, noisy, all that. But really a people who are enjoying themselves together in the Lord.

I think we do have just a little taste of that when we come together at these times, don't we? Strung from far and near, we spend a day or two together and there is something good about it. And I think that many look forward to the next time. It's good, it's good to have this solution.

But that is really Zion, practical, practical experience and working out that we ought to live more continually in the good of Zion. We are come. We are come.

For us Zion is not a distant prospect. Not something to which we are going. Or from time to time we go.

Zion is ever present. If we were really in the good of all that the Lord Jesus is and has done, together we would be a happier people. We would be a festive people.

City of our solemnity. If you like, the city of our festivity. This is Zion.

And Zion is so much more. Although I am so concerned when I'm saying all these things that they do not just remain good, pleasant, true ideas and conceptions and parts of the teaching. If you knew, dear friends, the background of these times together, you would know that there is no just speaking of some subject or addresses.

That it is a real, real exercise, deep and long before the Lord, that a Christic thing should be said. That every time we come together should have something to do with the hour. Be of that Christic character which relates to the hour and God's thought for the time.

We have no interest in anything other than that. Something for God's people in this day according to God's mind. And I feel sure that this word, all in upon my own soul, is not just to fill up a conference with messages and teachings, good, bad or indifferent.

But a message from God to us. To show us that God is seeking to recover the idea, conception of Zion in a people. Because his heart has always been bound up with Zion.

It is so. His heart is bound up with Zion. He must have Zion.

In other words, he must have that which is a blessing, a corporate, collective representation of what he has done and has given in his sight. If he finds that, he is satisfied. And so he would have us occupied with what occupies him.

That the things that he desires should be our desire. And mark you, they are essential to our life. They are essential to our life.

You take these things as being life and death matters. They are. No doubt about it.

If you really are set upon the Lord, you take note of these details which are presented through in symbolic language. We are always afraid of symbolic language because it does somehow or other get people into a mystical realm. Know these are very, very positively practical.

What I have said this morning contains tremendous issue. It is a matter of relatedness and fellowship. Don't you make any mistake about it.

Your life depends upon it. Your spiritual life depends upon it. And the devil knows that too.

And will spoil this whole thing if he can in some way or other. Oh yes, he hates Zion with a bitter hatred. And if the earthly Zion or Jerusalem has been the focal point of the contest and conflict of the nations and the ages all the way from its inception, that is only, only an illustration in the temporal and material of something that is very much more true in the spiritual, in the heavenly.

That this thing is contested. This thing is hated. This thing would be a battleground.

We leave that for a later time. But remember that we are represented as having come. This is a present thing to face, to be taken.

Not as being now made, but as being completed in Christ and offered to us. So go away not thinking of Zion as a thing. Do not contemplate Zion as a thing, an object.

But remember Zion is Christ in person. In the value of all his work in his people. That's Zion.

And that comes very close to us. That's not the person even next to you, that's you. So go away not thinking of Zion as a thing.

Do not contemplate Zion as a thing, an object. But remember Zion is Christ in person. In the value of all his work in his people.

That's Zion. And that comes very close to us. That's not the person even next to you, that's you.

And then it becomes the one next to you and all the others. Very, very practical. Oh, that Zion should be in our hearts, as it was in the hearts of the people of old.

If it was so much to them as a temporal thing, and at most a transient thing. Ought that which is the real thing. That of which the earthly is only after all a poor picture.

Ought not the real thing. Are more real to us because so much more a matter of life and death. Ought it not to be of our greatest store to us, to be cherished.

To be cherished. To be watched over. To be cared for.

To be exploited for all its wonderful possibilities. Ye are come to Zion.

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