

Ye Are Come to Zion - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the profound spiritual significance of Zion and its role in the cosmic controversy involving nations and God's ultimate plan for redemption.

Duration: 1:06:50

Scripture: Isaiah 43:14-19, Romans 8:19-22, Hebrews 12:22

Topics: "Zion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the conflict between God's chosen people and the nations of the world. The speaker emphasizes that God had a purpose for his chosen nation, Egypt, and all of nature was involved in this conflict. Despite the failures of the people, God did not forsake them and continued to work through them. The speaker also mentions the overthrow of the Babylonian empire and how God used it for his purposes. The sermon highlights the importance of having a strong testimony for God in the world.

Transcript

This conference time has been focused upon the present significance of a little clause in the 12th chapter of the letter to the Hebrews and the 22nd verse, ye are come to Zion. Various aspects of that statement have been considered and without any review we are proceeding to another this morning. I want you to have before you one or two other fragments of scripture.

Firstly in the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 34 and verse 8, for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense in the controversy of Zion chapter 31 and verse 4, for thus saith the Lord unto me, like as when the lion growleth, the young lion over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them. So shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon the hill thereof. In the prophecies of Jeremiah chapter 25, verse 31, the noise shall come even to the end of the year for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations.

He will plead with all flesh as for the wicked he will give them to the sword, saith the Lord. And in the second psalm, why do the nations rage, the peoples imagine a vain thing. Kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.

He that could live in the heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in division, then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and etch them in his sore displeasure, yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree the Lord said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And this morning we are to be occupied with meaning of that little phrase, the controversy of Zion, the controversy of Zion. We know that in the word, Zion and Jerusalem are often synonymous terms.

If there is a difference, Zion just means the intrinsic values of all that Jerusalem is supposed to represent and contain. We recognize that difference and must keep it in mind because when we come to Zion we are coming to the high peak, the ultimate significance of all that Jerusalem stands for. Speaking of Jerusalem, we know from history, from the scriptures, that Jerusalem has always been and still remains the storm center of the ages.

There's a little phrase in the Old Testament used of Jerusalem that she would be a cup of real and that behind the phrase is a picture. It really takes forth a threshold and on that threshold a cup holds and those who come to that threshold and drink of that cup, staggered and real, are thrown into confusion. Jerusalem is said in that picturesque way to be like that to the nations.

Nations coming against Jerusalem to find that on the very threshold they met something proven into confusion. It completely upsets all their calculation, a cup of really, to the nations. To the nations, yes, that is what Jerusalem has been and still is, literally.

They do not find that they can just play with Jerusalem, cope with Jerusalem, do as they like with Jerusalem. They meet that is more than Jerusalem. Not only to the nations but Jerusalem has always been a decisive point to Israel herself.

A kind of sign, a barometer, a telltale, representing the spiritual condition of Israel. If Jerusalem was in the ascendant, it was because the spiritual life of the people was in the ascendant. If Jerusalem were other than in the ascendant, that represented the spiritual life of Israel, its condition.

Jerusalem was always indicating spiritual life and Jerusalem's security and peace was always bound up to the spiritual condition of God's people. So, it was always a controversial matter, a spiritually controversial matter, whether to the nations or whether to Israel. If these things are true and they lie right on the face of history, if they are true in relation to the earthly and temporal Jerusalem and people of God, they are even more true in relation to that of which the earthly is but a figure after all.

What Paul calls the Jerusalem that is about and what this writer of the letter to the Hebrews, whoever he was, speaks of when he says ye are come to Zion. It is that controversy over this superior and supreme Zion that is to hold our attention this morning. For there is undoubtedly an even greater controversy over this that is meant by the spiritual and heavenly Zion than has raged over the earthly.

This is the very thing to which Paul himself referred in his letters of the Ephesians when he spoke about our wrestling being with principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly. That follows straight on from his presentation of the church, the body of Christ. And this is only another way of saying there's a tremendous controversy in heaven over this thing.

This is the occasion of cosmic upheavals, uprisings, disturbances, something going on in the unseen. However, a furious character directly and immediately related to this church, the Jerusalem which is about the Zion. It is to this same thing that Peter referred when he said, quoting from Isaiah, it is contained in scripture, behold I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, a stone assembly and a rock of offense, something that immediately raises a controversy, throws things into the realm of conflict and dispute.

Again, it is to this very thing that John refers in the tribulation. Then he sees that multitude who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, a victorious host over all the forces of evil and then says, I beheld and lo, a Lamb upon Mount Zion. This is a presentation of the tremendous conflict, conflict that circles around this that is called Zion.

Yes, and just as in the temporal and earthly and historical Jerusalem, or if you will, Zion, is a sign of the times, so it is in the spiritual. A sign of the times. I'm not launching into prophecy, but it is clearly understood, I believe, that Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem, has always been a sign of the times and still is.

We have come to the almost commonplace in saying, watch Jerusalem and you'll know the time of day. Watch Jerusalem, you'll know where you are in the dispensation. A sign of the times.

Why? Because God is acting in this whole world in a related way. Watch and you see the movement of nations, the movement of policies, you see things shaping, forming, moving in the whole world. God is moving and acting worldwide in a related way and acting in the earthly history in relation to Jerusalem.

Very significant. A sign of the times. So far as the world is concerned, so far as the nations are concerned, God is moving.

Something, dear friends, that we should lay hold of in days when everything seems to be in the melting pot, everything seems to be in turmoil and tumult and disturbance, we should remember that God is not only the God of Christians, he is the Lord of all creation, of heaven and of earth, and that all the nations are as a drop in the bucket with him, they're in his hands and he is manipulating the course of history, the movement of nations and all these things that are happening are not just the wild lawless run-amok events in the world, they are all governed from heaven, relatedly, every one of them. No political movement that is not under heaven's government just now in a related way concerning something and all the nations are like that with the Lord. It's all indicative of God's object, God's interest.

It's a sign of the times, it's a sign of spiritual condition, for God is not only acting in that kind of chronological way, working to a program and timetable in a cold mechanical way, he is moving upon a spiritual basis and it's all connected with spiritual conditions and spiritual conditions are all related to it. Now, having said that, we arrive at this, that it is made clear in the word of God and we will not spend time in dividing between the temple and the spiritual, it is made clear in the word of God that Zion will be the occasion of the supreme and final conflict in the history of this world, this present world order. Zion, if you like to reason, will be the theme and the occasion of the final consummate conflict of the ages of this world.

It will be upon Zion that everything is focused. Now, let us keep to our side of this matter. What does Zion symbolize? Let us say it again as we've said it many times in this conference.

Zion, the earthly, the literal, the material, the temporal, is after all, after all, at most, a symbol, a representation of spiritual things. Those spiritual things can be detected in the material, for God's material things always contain the elements of his spiritual. And Zion, therefore, symbolizes a full heavenly and spiritual testimony to Christ in the significance of his person and the value of his work.

And finally, to his God-determined destiny. Now, that's a big statement. You could break that up and grasp it.

You comprehend the whole history of the earthly. Zion, Jerusalem, understand what that's all about? It's true in its realm of the earthly. For there in Zion, when Zion is as God intended it to be, you have a full, heavenly, spiritual representation or embodiment of God's mind concerning his King and his way and the basis of it.

Always the altar and always the sanctuary. There are your elements. We're not going to follow those too closely.

We have so much on hand. But let us transfer that in its spiritual meaning to this Zion to which we are coming. What is Zion then for us? The Zion to which we are coming? This Jerusalem which is about, nay, this Jerusalem of which we are citizens.

This Jerusalem which has no existence apart from the people of God themselves who are the Jerusalem. What is it? It is this. A full, a heavenly, a spiritual representation, embodiment, expression of Christ in the significance of his person in God's universe.

The full, heavenly value of his work. That of course means the work of redemption by his cross. And the full declaration of the place that God has eternally destined that he should occupy.

That's the testimony of Zion. If that is true, and that is no small thing because any one of those three things can occupy a Christian for a whole lifetime and more. The significance of the person of Christ in God's universe.

Can you arrange that? Can you fathom that? Can you exhaust that? The value of his work by his cross. Can you arrange that? The eternally destined, predestined place that he shall occupy in God's universe. Can we comprehend that? Put those three things together and they constitute the testimony of Zion.

And no wonder there's a controversy. And no wonder that the controversy is as great as it is. Not surprised, are you? This is no little campaign, no little battle, no little fight.

This is ultimate. This is all inclusive. So let us go on.

This conflict and controversy has three aspects. One, as to the nations. Two, as to the realm of Christian profession.

And three, as to the ministry of the testimony of Zion. Let us look at those. The controversy has to do in the first place with the nations.

We have already stated that in general terms. But we'll look at it more closely. Of course I'm keeping to the scriptures.

I'm not outside of the scriptures although I'm not quoting every chapter and verse. The convulsions, the upheavals, the conflicts, the unrest, the frustrations in national and international affairs are all related to this testimony of Zion. That's saying a tremendous thing.

They are all related to, in other words, the inheritance of God's Christ. The nations are related. Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

That follows upon this. I have set my king upon my holy hill. So that all that is happening in the nations between them and amongst them is connected with this whole matter of Zion's testimony as to the inheritance of God's Christ.

And of course the inheritance of the saints with him. We have some very striking and forceful illustrations and instances of this kind of thing in the bible. We are all so very familiar with the controversy in Egypt with Pharaoh and with Egypt and with the gods of the Egyptians.

What a terrific controversy that was. How long drawn out. How thorough.

Steadily moving with growing momentum. Force working itself down ever deeper exhausting all the opposition. What a conflict.

The whole cosmic realm was involved. Natural phenomena. Sun, heaven, blackness, darkness, all nature was in convulsion.

Everything was gathered into this controversy with Egypt, with Pharaoh. What was it all about? Something that God had in the nations. Something that belonged to God.

Something that in the sovereignty of God was chosen to be the vessel of his testimony in the earth. And so this nation, this mighty kingdom of Egypt is thrown into convulsions. And all nature is thrown into convulsions over this one thing at the heart of the nation.

Babylon. True the people have failed the Lord and have been sent away into Babylon but the Lord has not forsaken and the Lord has not given up. The Lord has not abandoned his testimony.

So then what do we read? Well let's look at it in Isaiah 43. Verse 14. Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, your Redeemer, people who are in Babylon, the Holy One of Israel, for your sake I have sent to Babylon, for your sake I have sent to Babylon and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans in the ships of their rejoicing.

I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. I have sent to Babylon and will bring down all of them. Margin says they're nobles.

I will bring down all of them as fugitives for your sake. You know what happened in Babylon. A wonderful story isn't it? What happened in Babylon.

It just looks like the pageantry of world empires one following another. Oh no, God says I have brought all this about. It's a wonderful story which we cannot take time to go over.

The story of the overthrow of the Babylonian empire. The onward march of Cyrus. They approached to the doors and they were all inside off their guard in reverie.

That night fell shatterlessly. The doors were pounded and possibly they were unguarded and in came the next empire. And the Lord just describes that and says for your sake I have sent to Babylon.

All this, the overthrow of empires. The Babylonian empire was one of the greatest in the history of this world. I know the overthrow of empires because of a people right in the middle.

All this, all this is focused upon some deposit of God in the nations. The controversy is with the nations over some object. And that object is this Zion.

And if that dear friends is true of the historical and earthly, it is even more true of the spiritual in heaven. God has a deposit in the nations. And we are told that he has looked to take out of the nations of people for his name.

He's got in the nations of people for his name. And the things that are happening in the nations, though we may not be able to detect and follow and define things are happening in a related way. Just as the nations will vomit out the Jews and be glad to get rid of them as did Egypt.

And so the nations will. So, so a true people of God in this earth will make this world sick. But their world will want to get rid of them.

And the sovereignty of God will make a very attitude of antagonism and hatred and extortion. His own way of securing his people. He's working in the nations.

Tremendous thing to recognize this for your sake. Our point is that just as the nations are being dealt with or have been dealt with in relation to Israel of old. So the world is being dealt with in relation to this church that is in the field.

Note in Matthew 24 we have some of those signs of the end of the age given to us. Wars. Rumors of wars.

Now you say, well there always have been wars and always will be wars. What's the difference between those of Matthew 24 and the other? Well to begin with, have you counted the number of wars in recent years? There have been more wars in recent years than in any previous time in the history of this world. And we're never out of war.

Whether it's hot war or cold war we're never out of war. Well I'm not going to dwell upon these signs but there they are. And the signs in the heavens.

But what is the statement here? The Lord Jesus said all these are the beginnings of birth pains. But that's the beginnings of birth pains. We're a long way advanced I think in this matter beyond the beginnings.

Be that as it may, birth pains. Then something's got to be born. That's how the Lord views this whole situation.

This upheaval in the nations. This tumult. This unrest.

This frustration. We know that's the word that is really so apropos of the situation when he said distress of nations. He used a Greek word was employed which gives the picture of a trade, a business which has no way out.

It's shut up. It's a business that has been shut up. The Greek word means business.

No business. No business. No way out.

That's the word translated distress. But then the Lord says when. When you see this state of things the nations having no way out.

Oh isn't it true? No way out. They're trying all the time to find a way out aren't they? The Greek word means business. No business.

No business. No way out. That's the word translated distress.

But then the Lord says when. When you see this state of things the nations having no way out. Oh isn't it true? No way out.

They're trying all the time to find a way out aren't they? Find a way out. All the way round. A way out.

A way out of this. This dilemma. This predicament.

This situation. They can't find it. All their expedients and policies and diplomacies.

All the. All of it is not succeeding. They're having to make compromises all the way out and none of their compromises give them a way out.

No way out. Then the Lord says when you see these things lift up your heads. For your way out's coming.

Your way out. We know the way out. That is however by the way it's all to emphasize this.

That this is the beginning of taboo. Of birth pangs. Something is going out.

It's going to have a way out. That which has been locked up in the nations is coming out. Church is the only body that has a way out.

Has got a way out. Yes convulsions. Birth pangs is the word.

But there is so much in keeping with what Paul said isn't it in his letter to the room. Chapter 8 verses 19 to 22. We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now.

Or the manifestation of the sons of God. Yes there is travailing and groaning in the creation. We can hear it.

We can hear it with our spiritual ears. Well now let's go on. There has to be a testimony in the nations upon which God can work.

Which justifies his judgment of the nations. Which gives significance to his government of the world and the nations. There's got to be a testimony in the nations.

And such a testimony as will provoke God to jealousy among the nations. We so often put it in this connection. Words of the prophet.

I am jealous for Jerusalem with a great jealousy. I am jealous with great wrath. And that's connected in the prophecy you see with this.

The Lord has a controversy with the nations. He is jealous over something. Something that has is there that is very precious to him and very important to him.

He must have a testimony like that. And when he's got that his sovereignty comes into operation in all sorts of ways concerning that he may work on the long patient mind. But his moves while grinding slowly are grinding very small.

Though with patience he stands waiting with a sadness grinds he all. All related to that which is his in the earth. Something something in this earth in this world which is a disturbing factor.

A disturbing factor. It has set up inflammation. You know that's true for every Christian.

A true Christian does. You get an adequate testimony and you see the inflammation that's set up. You see what happens.

There's something there. You don't have to try and make trouble. Nothing whatever to do to precipitate it.

It's spontaneous. It happens. You may be the weakest and the mildest and the quietest person on God's earth but if Christ is vitally in you or as a company of such you'll find that your very presence promotes something.

And that provocation has the direction we must get rid of this. It's foreign to us. It doesn't belong to us.

It's something that is not of our constitution. We must get it out of our constitution. That's the world's attitude.

That's the attitude of the devil. His kingdom. There's something provocative in this earth disturbing so much and that is all we can say about the relationship of Zion to the nations.

I trust you see more than I have said. The significance of God having an adequate testimony in this world and what a tremendous thing it is. We must hurry to the next.

Zion and the testimony of Zion in relation to the realm of Christian profession. Realm of Christian profession and tradition. That realm in which with the name of Christian or of Christ the natural soul has its kingdom.

It's a terrible thing to say but it is quite true. Right there with the Christian title there is that which is just after all only the kingdom of the soul of man. The natural life.

And you find, you say it with glee, you find that there is correspondence even there in the realm of Christian profession to all that you have in the world in principle. All the same elements are active as in the world commercially and socially. Friends come, jealousies, rivalries, ambitions, personal interests.

You find them all ripe and in riot in a certain realm called Christian. They do not come from God, they do not come from the devil, but there they are. Yes, I repeat, rivalries in Christianity, in Christian work, in Christian interests, jealousies.

Jealousies for Christian things, personal interests to bring them into position, into reputation, into influence. You've touched them and you meet something but kick them. Christianity is a sphere of many selfish, personal, natural ambitions.

Men support themselves in the realm of Christianity to get advanced, to gratify their own natural desires. I'm pleased to say that but it's a fact because we know it so well. There it is.

That's one aspect of that realm of Christian profession. The eyes, as a flame of fire, see through it. They see through it.

They know all about it. Another aspect is that it's a realm of zeal without knowledge. And that's a terrible realm, you know.

Terrible kind of thing, zeal but not according to knowledge. Kind of shadow land where men are seen as trees walking. That is something indistinct in spiritual apprehension.

No power or capacity or faculty for discriminating between what is soulful Christianity and spiritual Christianity. Things are all mixed up and confused. I said at the beginning, some of you weren't going to understand some of the things I said.

Perhaps that's one of them. But it's all solid thinking. To most, things are mixed up.

You, in so much that is going on, cannot draw even a thin line between man's soul and its ambitions and its activities and its thoughts and what is really purely of the Spirit of God. It's all so mixed up and people don't seem to be able to discriminate or discern between the two. Therefore, many, many innocent people are carried away by the semblance of things, thinking that it is something quite good and quite right.

Everything is indistinct, confused, with very limited regulation. This was the kind of thing with which Paul had to do in Judaism. It's Judaism.

A confusion of the old covenant with the new. The old position with the new. Trying to mix them up and make a Jewish Christianity.

Making one thing of it. One thing of it. Judaism and Christianity.

No gap between. No difference. Judaizing Christianity and Christianizing Judaism.

Paul was up against this. No, these two things belong to two different realms and kingdoms altogether. One belongs to the realm of the soul and the other belongs to the mind.

There's a clean ditch to be made between these, cutting through, discriminating. But, in the realm of Christian profession and tradition, there is not a capacity for that discrimination. Things are all mixed up.

Again, I use Christ's letter for men as trees walking. No power to clearly define what it is. What it is.

It seems to be like this and yet it is not all clear for our confused state of things. Much that is believed to be the truth is being fought for. And it is, after all, only a legalistic interpretation of the truth.

There is so much failure, so much failure, and so much inability to grasp the meaning of the truth. You know, there's such a difference, dear friends, between a truth stated in Scripture and God's meaning of the statement. You are not able to discriminate between those two things.

You see, you'll be in constant confusion. That is just what we have here. Here's the letter.

But what did God mean by that? If you cannot discriminate, you can take that letter to support a thousand different, opposing things. Take any bit of Scripture and use it to support something that is entirely in conflict with another thing based upon the same Scripture. It needs the Holy Spirit's interpretation, enlightenment, witness, and judgment to bring us to the truth.

But in the realm of Christian profession, there is not such a capacity or faculty. Now, God's got a controversy with this. For his true testimony, he will have a controversy with what is called Christianity, as surely as he had with Judaism.

He will indeed. And very likely, the thing will rage at greater intensity in that realm than in any other. I cannot follow that further.

This is a matter, this is a matter about which the Lord has very, very real concern. Zion represents, amongst all the other things which it does represent, the transparent light of heaven. Zion's light.

Thy light is come. The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. That absolute transparency.

That clear seeing of issues. That clear discrimination. That is what Paul meant when he spoke about the things discerning, the things that differ.

Things that differ. And as you know, he was speaking about not the wrong and the right, but the good and the best. The good and the best.

Zion represents the best, and God will not be satisfied with anything less than his full and ultimate testimony. Now, I must come to the end of this morning, the third application or realm of the controversy as to the ministry of Zion. As to the ministry of Zion.

Of course, this includes, one, two, conflict with the nations. The conflict with tradition and formal Christianity. But it comes very much more inward when it comes to the ministry of Zion.

Yes, much more inward. This controversy rests upon some things that we must seek to understand, dear friends. It was in this particular connection that I was speaking at the beginning about having understanding.

You see, the ministry of Zion, the ministry of Zion is a greatly disputed thing. The ministry of Zion is something around which the battle circles more hotly, perhaps than in any other connection. This whole matter of ministry in relation to God's true purpose.

What a battle. What a battle. Paul knew something about this.

How he besought believers, repeatedly, that they would pray earnestly that he might be given assurance to open his mouth to speak the mystery. That a door might be opened to him to speak the mystery. This is not something that you, about which you can get up and address and go out willy-nilly and begin to give it out.

If it is rightly constituted, it is fraught with the most terrific controversy. This ministry, if it is the true ministry of Zion, rests firstly upon, and is constituted by, a sovereign apprehending of a vessel. Sovereign apprehending of a vessel, Paul.

Because that is so true of the historical Zion. God's sovereign choosing of Zion. It is there in the scripture declared and made clear, very positively, it was a sovereign act of God that chose Zion.

But Zion is a vessel, a symbolic vessel, and a vessel for Zion. That is for Zion's ministry, the fullness of the significance of Christ and his work and his place in God's universe, a vessel for the ministry of that is something sovereignly apprehended by God. Raised up by God.

When I say sovereignly, there's no explanation for it other than this is of God. Cannot account for it in any way, whatever, but touch it, you meet the Lord. Be amongst it, you meet the Lord.

Somehow or other, the Lord is responsible for this. It takes a course. Whether that be collective or individual, it's something sovereignly raised up by God.

Anything cannot do this. You cannot do this by choice. You have no choice in this matter of ministry.

You cannot aspire to this. You cannot walk into this. You cannot put your hand upon this.

You cannot take out this ministry. Oh, it is such a sifting and discriminating thing. Many people like it, like the ideas, and they're going to propagate those ideas and begin to take up this thing and say, make it this.

But it just doesn't do. Either they get into confusion or other people do, or something happens that it doesn't work out. You have a caricature, you have a contradiction, you have the absence of the vital thing.

Something that you cannot just like that take up. If God himself has not apprehended you for that purpose, he may have apprehended you for something else. But if he hasn't apprehended you for that, it's no use.

Keep out of it. Something out of the sovereignty of God. A lot of things that touches, doesn't it? You see, dear friends, it amounts to this.

That this whole matter of such a testimony is a matter of life and death with us and nothing less an issue. That's something we can take up and drop. That's something that we can come into and then not like it and be offended and resign, throw out.

It's a matter of life and death. And I'm there because my very life is found in my being there. And it would be committing spiritual suicide for me to drop out.

That's very utter. I'm not saying that God's sovereignty operates only in this ministry or that ministry of utter fullness of Christ. It operates in other ways.

But I am saying as to the testimony of Zion, first of all, it's something right out of the sovereignty of God. And man has no place in it other than that of faith and obedience. Man has no proprietary interest in this.

No possessive place in this. No controlling place in this. It's the law.

Wholly, utterly the law. It should cease to be that. Everything goes.

Everything goes. Man cannot just carry that on. He can carry the framework on.

He can't carry that on. He can still have the tabernacle and shadow but the glory of departing. It's the law.

That's a very solemn word, very certain word. Zion is constituted then by the sovereign apprehending of God. Then by a sovereign government of God behind the history of the things.

So it wants a lot of explaining. It can be illustrated. Paul the apostle said, very pleased by God, who separated me from my birth, to reveal his son to me.

He touched his own heart. My birth, from my birth, my birth, my birth was into a Jewish family. My birth was so utterly, 100 percent Jewish.

My family, but right there while I was like that in the most complete and utter Jewish setting, birth, blood, training, education, and while all that heat of antagonism to Christ was still in my blood, although it had not come out until it was provoked, I was all there, while my hatred of the Gentiles whom I called the dogs was in my very constitution, God had already separated me to be the messenger of Christ to the Gentiles, to have all that heat in my blood against his son, Quincy, rather a new-found kindred, not for their son. But the point is, right behind the man's earthly history was the sovereignty of God, foreseeing him, foreknowing him, forechoosing him, and arranging everything, arranging everything in line with his ultimate calling and the purpose of his life. Difficult thing to believe, isn't it, that it's like that? And yet, when God has a vessel for a purpose in view, there is no afterthought.

It does not just arise at some point in time. God has seen it, foreseen it, known all about it, and has worked in relation to it, and its very birth and environment are under his sovereignty to some good purpose, in relation to the ultimate meaning. We may have to live a long time before we discover that.

Nay, let me put it this way, we have to get right into line with God's purpose and God's thought before we see anything of how true that was, that our very birth and constitution and environment and all that has some relationship to the thing to which we are called. Now, if you can't understand and grasp that, don't worry about it, but it's a fact. The sovereignty of God lying behind our earthly experience and history, in relation to the purpose.

That constitutes this vessel. And then, in the third place, this ministry of Zion is constituted by a drastic and deep work in the vessel. A drastic work in the vessel.

A deep work in the vessel. This is not something that we can take up. Apart from something that has been done in us, that God is doing in us, the undoing of us, the taking us to pieces, the stripping of us, the emptying of us, and bringing us to zero.

Starting from there all over again with us. That's the sort of thing connected with Zion and Zion's ministry. Don't you make any mistake about it.

The nature of this ministry, dear friends, the ministry of which we're speaking, Zion's ministry, the ministry of Zion, is something utterly different in its nature and its wealth from all other ministries. It's possible to look on and admire. It's possible to walk in and out, or sit down inside, and appreciate the truths, and agree with the ideas, and to recognize something of the values, and to desire the benefits, and to seek to participate.

It's possible for all that, and therefore there to be a great dividing out. With all the agreement, and admiration, and recognition, and desire, there may be lacking the constitution of Zion. The constitution.

The constitution of Zion is what? That God has broken clean through all natural faculties and abilities for understanding, and by revelation planted right deep down in the center of the being a knowledge of a spiritual kind, which is different from natural knowledge. He's not taking up the phraseology, and the ideas, and all that sort of thing, and appreciating, and valuing, and agreeing, and then going repeating. It's something that's been done inside, and the thing has come by revelation of the Holy Ghost.

That's the ministry of Zion, and I say that discriminates, that divides, and it's because things are like that that you have so much conflict. You find the very conflict in the realm of that ministry. It rises there.

It rises in the realm that people, yes, they agree, and they accept, and they repeat, and they like, and they want, so on, but they're not constituted. Violent, violent conflict arises in that realm. You only took the matter of ministry itself.

I mean now public ministry. You find that it's the most controversial point in all of Christianity. More trouble, more trouble has arisen over ministry than over anything else.

Platform ministry. And in Zion, no one has a right to minister, no one has a qualification for ministry, who cannot sit back, and do no ministry at all, quite easily, if the Lord wants it. You got it? It ought to be just as easy for a minister of Zion to take a back seat, and wait for the Lord, and watch for the Lord, as it is for the natural soul to want to be on that side.

That may be speaking to a very limited company, but I focus upon this matter of ministry, the ministry of Zion. It's of a quality, of a kind, of a constitution, and that is not studied. That is not the result of going to books, and taking out of books the truths.

Observing, and hearing, and then reproducing. It's something inward. Oh, how the devil rages over a ministry of that kind, because it's going to do something, it's going to do something.

It's going to touch God's ultimate purpose, and if he can, he'll destroy it, and destroy the vessels of it. He will stop at nothing, to bring an end to that kind of ministry. It is true.

Here, the controversy of Zion rages. It rages over the ministry. See, the whole point of the controversy and the conflict is its reality, its essence, its essential value, the very life of it, the very power of it, the very distinctiveness of it.

For if Satan focuses upon one aspect of such a testimony more than another, it is to destroy its distinctiveness, to in some way get it drawn out into a generalization, conform it to a recognized system, take away that distinctive evidentness, and it's a terrific battle all the way along to keep the testimony clear, distinct, unmixed. It is, friends, you may not know all that I'm saying, but it's quite true. It's something in a different realm from mere mental apprehension.

You can have the same truth by study.

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