

# A Holy Nation

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a holy life, being separated from the world and its influence, and living a life of holiness and purity in order to be a holy nation and to have a testimony that counts.*

**Duration:** 33:17

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:5, Exodus 14:29, Matthew 21:42, Matthew 21:44, 1 Peter 2:7, 1 Peter 2:9-10

**Topics:** "Church"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of separation from the world in the life of Abraham. God called Abraham to leave his country, his family, and his father's house in order to establish a people of a different kind. The speaker highlights how God demonstrated the evil nature of the world through the plagues in Egypt and how He met Moses at the burning bush to deliver His people from the power of darkness. The sermon also mentions the Israelites' struggle with their hearts still being attached to Egypt even after being physically separated, and how crossing the Jordan River symbolized their hearts finally being out of Egypt. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for believers to be separated unto God and live a holy life that leaves a mark for God.

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## Transcript

In the Gospel by Matthew, chapter 21, verse 42, Jesus said unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures the stone which the builders rejected? The same was made the head and the corner. This was from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

He that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces. But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. The first letter of Peter, second chapter, verse 7. For you, therefore, which believe, is the preciousness.

But for such as disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head and the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. For they stumbled at the word, being disobedient. Whereunto also they were appointed.

But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have

obtained. These passages belong, as you see, to that very solemn, in some respects, or on one side, tragic thing. The truth that all that could and should have been the inheritance and the vocation of Israel was lost by them and to them because of their unbelief and was transferred to the church, the holy nation.

As the church is here designated by Peter. It is Peter who has taken those Old Testament words and the words which the Lord Jesus himself took from the Old Testament and transferred to himself. It is Peter who has done that.

Peter has a peculiar place in this transition, an interesting place, a very instructive place. The Lord has said to Peter, Thou art Peter, piece of rock. Upon this rock of Peter's testimony, undoubtedly, I will build my church.

There is no doubt about it that in Peter's mind, the stone which was rejected of the builders and became the head of the corner was identical with the rock upon which the church would be built. Peter was the one who heard that statement from the Lord and it is Peter who, so many years afterward, has taken up the thought here in his letter. The stone, the rock, the building of the church, there upon, there around, I will build.

The Lord had in that very connection of the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner said, The kingdom shall be taken from you and given to a nation, bringing forth the fruit thereof. Peter, he had said, and I will give you the keys of the kingdom. And here is Peter, using this very phrase, a holy nation, answering to that which was in the declaration of the Lord Jesus, taken from Israel, as they were set aside.

I, the kingdom, heaven, shall be taken from you and given to a nation. Now Peter is here speaking of a holy nation to show forth the excellences, corresponding to bringing forth the fruit thereof. Now Peter opens this letter, as you see, by indicating that he is addressing the scattered of the dispersion over the world, the saints of the dispersion, in all these many nations, in all these many nations, and places or parts of the earth.

And he says, Ye, ye saints scattered in the nations, dispersed over the earth, ye are a holy nation. Not you are going to be, but now. As scattered everywhere, you are just a nation in the nations.

But you are different from the nations. Now our present emphasis, this morning, is upon this one word. Ye are a holy nation.

A holy nation. Upon that word, holy, the tragedy of Israel took place. The transference of all the divine intention was effected.

Upon that one word, the church inherits all that. See, the whole changeover, the terrible tragedy and loss of Israel, and the glorious inheritance of the church, it just hangs upon one word, holy. Holy.

Everything rests upon that. If Israel's loss of the divine intentions for that people as a nation is all due to this one thing, failure in what God means by holiness. Yes.

And if the church comes in only on that ground, then it's a very governing thing, isn't it? This matter of what the Lord means by holiness. And we could go as far as to say there is no guarantee of the church retaining its inheritance and vocation beyond its holiness. Yes.

It could very well be said of people, even in this dispensation, the Christian dispensation, it shall be taken from you and given to those bringing forth the fruits thereof. That's the only grant. You, no more than Israel, can claim to stand and abide on mere tradition, on mere history, on mere externals, our practice and teaching.

The basis with God is holiness. What He means by holiness. No one can contemplate the awfulness of Israel's tragedy over these two thousand years without feeling that here in the presence of something very, very great, important, and in a sense something very terrible, this matter of holiness.

And you know that there are other words into which this one word is translated. Simply means, we often say, sanctified, separated, set apart for God. Many ways of expressing it.

But that's what it is. This is something which belongs to God, solely and wholly. And belonging to God, it is sacred.

It is holy. It is sanctified. It is separated from all that is contrary to God.

That is holiness. Now for light on this matter, we of course do have to go back to the Old Testament. And we begin with the realization that after man's disobedience at the beginning, and that's the heart of the trouble of all unholiness, as is here stated, the whole world, to use the phrase of an apostle, fell into the arms of the wicked one.

The whole world lieth in the wicked one. The whole world lieth in the wicked one. That is the revelation of the early chapters of the Bible, isn't it? We need not stay to emphasize, or to illustrate, or to cite.

There it is. God beheld, God looked down, but all men gone astray. The whole world lieth in the wicked one.

Then God moved to extricate from that world in the lap of the wicked one a people of a different kind. We have His move with Abraham. And here, dear friends, with all your interest in the life of Abraham and the incidence in his life and all your study and reading of that life, remember that the heart of everything where Abraham was concerned was this one thing, to separate from this world.

So the word came to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred, and from thy father's house. Get thee out. Now this is a literal, geographical movement, but contains a spiritual principle.

A getting out of that realm, lying in the wicked one. So Abraham went out from out of the colonies. In a typical sense, he went out from this world in the wicked one.

And then God promised him a son. Made promise of Isaac and went away and left him, as he so often seems to do after he's made a promise. Leaves for a long time.

But do you notice, with one object, why did God promise and then not fulfill his promise for so long? And leave Abraham so tested and tried by his promise, by his word. Why? For this one thing only, that that son had got to be different from all other sons. That son could not come the natural way.

That son could not be like all other sons of this world. He must be God's act. And so God saw to it that although he promised, the natural way was impossible.

Simply closed down. No hope along that line. And when at length, Isaac was born, he was God's miracle.

Something not of this world, but of God. But even so, God is going to ratify that and confirm that principle. The day came when the lad had grown to youth.

The Lord said to Abraham, Take now thy son, thine only, only son, whom thou lovest and offer him. And so, today, Isaac must go. In which all the natural ties were severed and broken.

And Isaac being brought back as in figure by resurrection from the dead was simply put on supernatural ground again. The heavenly divine supernatural ground of things was confirmed by God in that event. See what God is doing? Putting everything on holy ground.

You know, God can give us things that are undoubtedly given us by God and we know it at the time. And then we lay hold and impinge upon them. Hold them to ourselves.

And so our natural life comes right in on this matter. Take hold. The Lord takes us through drastic experiences to sever our natural selves from divine things.

To keep them holy. Because even our affections are not always pure. Not always holy.

God put everything on that ground. Outside of this corrupt devil ridden, devil governed world. And who will not say that that is the state of the world.

Did it with Abraham. That's where he made his start toward a holy nation. A holy nation.

He laid the foundation in holiness. When his promise and covenant with Abraham had reached the stage of a nation being in existence. Israel is in Egypt in the world.

No doubt about it in the lap of the devil, the evil one. Pharaoh is a type of the prince of this world. You see the Lord takes pains to show what a tyrant he is.

Takes pains to show how evil he is. I venture to say there's no one in this place this morning and there are a few people in this world who would put up with half what Pharaoh put up with without letting those people go. So God went through plague after plague.

Right up to the tent in death itself. For one purpose on the one side he is showing the nature of the evil one. How evil he is.

On the other well he met Moses as you know out there in the desert at the bush alive with fire but never consumed and this is the man who is going to bring that people out of the power of darkness. Out of the bondage of the prince of this world. Out of this evil people.

And God meets him there and what does God say? Put off thy shoes and off thy feet for the ground the place whereon thou standest is holy. Is holy. The instrument must in figure in type be separated from the evil ground the evil earth the evil kingdom.

No one can lead another soul out of bondage who is still in bondage himself. No one can help other people into a life with God who is not separated from this world. So the very instrument Moses himself has to come on to holy ground consecrated ground separated ground with what? Fire fire between this world and that between God and the evil one.

There's a fire which never dies fire which draws the line of distinction between what is holy and what is not holy. To Egypt he goes with his commission and we know the story. Yes there in a kingdom in a world that is repudiated and has got to be brought out but it is by virtue of precious blood the blood of the lamb the blood of the Passover by the mighty efficacious blood of a lamb without spot separated by precious holy blood.

This is Peter speaking again ye were not redeemed with corruptible things of silver and gold but with precious blood as of a lamb without spot and blemish and then you would think that that had effected it forty years there in the wilderness and what is the one thing that comes up so clearly during those forty years that although they are out of Egypt Egypt is not out of them.

Although they are geographically separated spiritually their hearts are still back in Egypt they're talking about Egypt hankering for Egypt after all and so we come to Jordan the mighty overflowing Jordan lying between them and that life as a nation which is to satisfy God fulfill a holy vocation and that Jordan flows deep and strong between their hearts in Egypt and at last their hearts out of Egypt you see the principle is working all the time God is carrying this thing very deep and you pass on to later history in that nation when they go into captivity and exile and a remnant comes back you remember that crisis in the book of Israel when they've come back and the house was being restored beautified a crisis arose it was over one thing the people had married foreign wives and the whole

thing was spoiled came under arrest it was as though God said we are not going on with this now you read again what Ezra did over that matter brought everything up short on this question of mixed marriages all again a figure of this spiritual mixture which God will not have unholiness the mark and line of distinctiveness between what is of God and what is not of God drawn fast and hard well what are we going to say to all this that's a very brief and perfect survey but dear friends do you see that the very beginning of the Christian life the very beginning of the Christian life rests upon this one historic law of God right through the ages which he cannot overlook the beginning of the Christian life is called being born anew or more correctly born from above what does it mean? it means

all that Isaac's birth and resurrection meant in figure means this that by our very new birth we are translated out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God by our very new birth our conversion call it what you will the very beginning of the Christian life is an absolute separation of two kingdoms a transference from one into another one is an unholy realm into which we are born and to which we belong by nature the other is a holy realm you are a holy nation a nation separated from this world unto God new birth means that that was made clear to all right there beginning how utter this thing is the Lord Jesus left people in no doubt about this a cleavage utter and absolute he would take risks with people you would say probably oh why put them off why run the risk of

offending them why discourage them saying accept, accept, accept all the time he was taking all the risks necessary about this because of the reality of the awful reality of this that you cannot you cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven while you cling to this kingdom inevitable to God in any way two things cannot go together one is unholy the other is holy by new birth we cross a line which is a very broad line as broad as the Red Sea and as the Jordan as broad as the cross of the Lord Jesus new birth it's a life of holiness that we have taken up or entered into a life of holiness separation unto God complete separation unto God it's to be a walk in holiness how much the New Testament has to say about this a walk in holiness that is separate unto God in heart in spirit, in life from this

world and if we knew it a very large degree of our education our spiritual education our discipline in the Christian life under the hand of the Holy Spirit has to do with those things in us which are mixed up are mixed up we are trying to make the best of two worlds we are trying to keep together in compromise things which before God do not belong and are going to spell disaster for us aren't you disaster for us as truly as ever is felt disaster for Israel going to lose the kingdom the Lord calls for distinctiveness of life and testimony real distinctiveness of life and testimony is our life dear friends is your life and my life in this world in our connections, associations and so on, quite distinct no mistaking to what realm we belong to whom we belong no mistaking or are we mixed in

compromising, keeping on good terms with this world and its people under the devil's hand, if so we stand to lose terribly we do what sort of a testimony have you got where you work in your business and its associations what sort of a testimony have we got in the church are we really registering and making our mark in the church do we count in the church are we passengers is there something quite distinctive about our lives that says that man, that woman, that young man that young woman is utter forgot no doubt about it you see it all the time they are utter forgot they are not playing at things no compromise with them now this sounds hard, but it's necessary do you see what's involved dear friends, the secret of power is holiness it is, the secret of power is holiness if our lives are

powerless it may be due to this lack somewhere, somehow, of this utterness for God, this separation unto God of some kind of compromise, somehow, somewhere with the prince of this world, who is robbing us of our spiritual power and vitality on his own ground the secret of power is holiness whatever you forget, remember that the secret of a testimony that counts is a holy life it's not our teaching, our truth our practice religious ordinances and so on our forms it's nothing of that in the first place our real testimony is the testimony of a holy life it counts far more than all our words it really does and remember this being true this is the secret of divine support the Lord will commit himself to his own ground holiness the Lord will stand by those who stand for him in his nature the

Lord will look after such and whatever we may have in this life, in this world, we may have a lot but mark you if we haven't got the Lord with us at last it's no gain, it's no gain it's a terrible loss Israel had the ordinances and the oracles and the tradition and all that a mighty lot that they had, but at last they lost the kingdom they lost the kingdom there was no gain was it well now, what are we concerned about what are you concerned about, what am I concerned about I can focus it all down to this one thing, I'm concerned about the Lord being with us and the Lord committing himself to us and I'm concerned about a testimony in power, a life that counts for God, leaving a mark for God, being remembered for what was of God this is the only justification of our having come this way at

all and as I see it all that depends upon this utter separation unto God gathered into this word holiness ye are a holy nation may we answer to the description and to us will be the preciousness

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