

Has It Come From Heaven by the Spirit of God?

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's presence with man and the need for a revelation of Jesus Christ in order to understand God's work.

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, John 1:14, Galatians 1:15, Hebrews 8:5

Topics: "Presence of God", "Revelation of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the need to return to the foundational principles of Christianity, which have become obscured by human traditions and complexities over the centuries. He highlights that God's desire has always been to dwell among His people, first symbolized through the tabernacle and ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is the true Tabernacle of God. Sparks stresses that the presence of God is what makes any place sacred, not the physical structures or gatherings of people. He calls for a revelation of Christ as the basis for all Christian life and service, asserting that true work for God must be inspired and anointed by the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a reminder that only what is rooted in Christ will endure, as everything else will be tested and ultimately dissolved.

Transcript

There may be one or two who have joined us this morning who have not been with us on these other mornings this week. For their sake and for the sake of all of us, may I just repeat what it is that is occupying us at this time. We are all aware that during the centuries, Christianity has become a tremendous buildup of things which were not at the beginning. The Christianity which we know today is a very complicated thing. The hands of men have come upon the things of God, and men have tried to build this great thing according to their own judgment. And so we have all the confusion, all the divisions, and all the complications. It is really hard going in Christianity. Christianity has become its own great hindrance. So what we are being led to do in these mornings is to get back behind all this accretion of Christianity, and to rediscover and redefine the first basic principles. We are asking the Lord just to bring us into a clear definition of those things which are true to Christianity. We have said quite a lot in these mornings which we cannot repeat. And those who join us for the first time must understand that.

We are proceeding this morning from a somewhat advanced point. May I remind you of the two fragments of Scripture which are governing our consideration just now. One in the Old Testament, and the other in

the New. In the Old Testament, the Book of Exodus, chapter twenty-five and verse eight: "LET THEM MAKE ME A SANCTUARY; THAT I MAY DWELL AMONG THEM." The other is in the Gospel by John, chapter one, verse fourteen: "AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US." We have seen that word "dwelt" is really in the original: "Tabernacled." "THE WORD BECAME FLESH, AND TABERNACLED AMONG US." In these two passages we have the eternal thought of God, first set forth in type, and then set forth in reality. That thought of God was always that He might dwell among men. We have seen how, when things were according to His mind in the beginning, the Lord God came into the garden, found His pleasure in dwelling with man. And then He had to withdraw. The desire of God for the time being was suspended. Now in the Book of Exodus, we find God taking up His thought, and commanding them to build the tabernacle, that He might dwell among them. That was all imperfect. We cannot say that God was always happy to be amongst the people of Israel. There was something that still needed to be done to make Him perfectly satisfied. So that it was only in a type and figure that God was with them. But when it comes to His Son, God is in Christ, and GOD'S SON BECAME FLESH, AND TABERNACLED AMONG US.

Now it is at that point that we are going to take things up this morning. Christ, the Son of God, is the Tabernacle of God. We need to be very clear about that. The dwelling place of God now and for eternity is in His Son. The Person is the residence of God, not in type, but in reality; not for a time, but for all eternity. Christ is God's Tabernacle. His name is Emmanuel, "God with us." His ministry was, and is, the service of the Tabernacle. His sacrifice, His Cross was the all-inclusive sacrifice of the Tabernacle. As there was an outer door to the Tabernacle, He is the door. He, alone, is the Way unto God. As there was the great altar just inside the door, His Cross is the altar. As there was the laver of brass a little further on, so through His Cross and by His Spirit, the Spirit of life, He cleanses us to come into the Presence of God. These things, and everything, had to do with just one thing: God's Presence with man. Everything is related to this one issue, the Lord being with us.

Now, just as God was very particular about every detail in the old tabernacle, so God is very particular that everything for His Presence expresses Christ. With God there are no mere things. Things are not sacred to God. It does not matter what it is; it is not sacred to God apart from one thing. It is in this matter that we have got to change our whole mentality.

You will go about this country, you will go about this city, and you will see these great religious buildings with a cross at the top. And when people enter those buildings, they bow themselves; they look very reverent. And they think that this is a sacred building. If you interfere with anything there, it is called sacrilege. To God that is all nonsense. It does not mean anything at all. The only thing that matters to God is not the wonderful building and all the wonderful things inside the building, and not even the cross on the top. The one thing that matters to God is whether He is there. Is God Himself present in this place?! For God, it is no different from any other place, if it is not the place of His Presence.

Of course, most of you here this morning agree with that. But what about ourselves, we hear Christians who come into a meeting like this speaking about coming into the house of God. Perhaps they say when they are going to this meeting place, 'I am going to the house of God.' And when they pray, they say, 'We are very glad to be in the house of God this morning; it is a good thing to be in the Lord's house.' What makes any place the house of God? What makes this place sacred? If it is sacred at all, what makes it sacred? It is not the building, this is not a sacred building. It is not a congregation gathered here. The only thing that makes it sacred is that the Lord is Present. The Lord is not interested in our places or in our congregations; He is only concerned that He may find a place for Himself where He may be present in

pleasure. I wonder where the tabernacle in the wilderness is now?! I expect it is buried somewhere deep under the earth. I wonder where the great temple of Solomon is now?! I think you would be wasting your time to try and find it. You see, God had buried those things. Well, they were so sacred that God ought to preserve them. But He has not done it. When the tabernacle ceased to fulfill its real meaning, it was no longer sacred to God.

When the temple ceased to fulfill its real purpose, God just left it. And again and again, He allowed the heathen to come and destroy it. **THE PURPOSE IS THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.**

Now all this sounds very elementary and simple, but we are right back at the first thing. John begins by saying, "In the beginning, God," and it is not only God in the beginning, it is God right through to the end. God is only where His Son is. But, wherever His Son is, God is there. We have got to be very careful indeed that we do not set up false ground for the presence of God. It is not here or there, in this mountain or in Jerusalem, it is where His Son is. And we will have to put aside all other matters and say, if the Lord is with you, I am with you. But in order for that to be true, there are two things that are most important.

We are keeping very close to the beginning. We got right back behind Christianity as we know it. You see, the Christianity that we know is not like that. Indeed it is very largely very different from that. Of course, we could spend a lot of time showing how different Christianity is from that. And that is all negative. We want to keep to the positive.

Now note then, the first thing that relates to the Presence of God is this: God always begins with a presentation of His Son. In some way, a revelation of the Son of God is the basis upon which God always begins. If it is in the Old Testament, it is in a type or a figure, but whether men saw and understood it or not, there it was. Of course, that is a very big Bible study. If you understood the works of God in creation, as in the Book of Genesis, you would see Jesus Christ. You would see in every detail some expression of God in Christ. That is a very wonderful thing for those who have had their spiritual eyes opened. It says about God's Son, 'that all things were created by Him, and through Him, and unto Him.'

Now when you create something, you may be an artist and you may be painting a picture, you may be a sculptor, you may be making a statue, or it may be something else. If you are really a craftsman, if you are not just doing things for the sake of doing them, you put yourself into your work. When people see your work afterwards, they say, 'What a wonderful man or woman they are.' They can see your mind in this. They can see your heart in this. The whole thing speaks of the creator. You pass from the thing that was made to the one who made it. If the Son of God really did make all things, He did not do it just in an objective way, He put Himself into it. And if you have spiritual understanding, you will see more than the creations. You will see in everything the One Who created it. There it is, God has presented His Son. It is a revelation of the Son of God. That is where God began. That is the beginning.

When you come to this matter of the tabernacle, do remember that man never thought of this. This never came out of the mind of man. This came out of the mind of God. God said to Moses, "See," saith He, "that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). God has only one object in His mind, and He works everything in relation to that one object. The one object which God has in His mind is His Son. So that this TABERNACLE was a typical representation of the Son of God in every detail. This was another beginning of God. The beginning was the constitution of the nation Israel, a definite people on this earth.

Let me just re-emphasize this: with God everything begins with a revelation of His Son. If we go beyond that, God will bring us back to it. That is true in the matter of Salvation. There is no true beginning of the Christian life without a seeing of Jesus Christ as God's Son. And that is true of all the progress of the Christian life. God keeps all our spiritual progress true to the revelation of Jesus Christ. And that is true of all the work of God. All the true work of God has got to be done by our seeing the Lord Jesus. Jesus Himself lived on that principle. He said: 'The works that I do, I do not out from Myself, but whatsoever the Son seeth the Father doing, that doeth He.' 'The words that I speak, I speak not out from Myself. The Father doeth the works and the Father gives the words' (John 5:10; 14:10). Jesus lived His life in full view of the Father. And He would not speak, or do one work, unless the Father told Him to. What is true of the Lord Jesus has got to be true of us all. We can only live this life of the Christian as we see the Lord Jesus.

To return to the tabernacle, we will use it as an illustration for a little while. The inclusive fact about the tabernacle is that it was not a thing. It was not a thing at all. It was a Divine meaning. That meaning was covered. If other people, which were not of Israel, came and looked at that tabernacle, they would have said, 'Well, that is a funny thing, what sort of a thing is that?' But the truth was inside. The truth was a mystery, and it required the opened eye of the heart to see the truth in that.

John, many years after the life of the Lord Jesus, said: "He became flesh, and Tabernacled among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." He was only saying, in other words, 'We saw inside of Him. We saw the Divine meaning in Him.'

Now when Jesus was here on this earth, He was the very Tabernacle of God. He was the very Dwelling Place of God in this world. But what did men see? Well, Isaiah said, "And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:2,3). Just as the stranger would have said about the tabernacle, 'There is no beauty in that. It is all covered over with these skins. We see no beauty in that.' They would have despised and rejected it. But John said, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). John had the inward revelation of Jesus Christ.

And, of course, John was not the only one. The Apostle Paul placed everything upon this truth. All his life and all his ministry was the result of what he said, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15,16). It is a revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart, which is always God's beginning, both for life and for service and for the Church. We ought never to do anything in the work of God, unless we get it from the Lord.

That is why committees are often very dangerous things. We gather together a number of men. Why do we gather them together? Well, we think that they are intelligent people. Perhaps they have been successful in business. And perhaps they have influence in this world. And we get them together to consider the work of the Lord. Well, do not be surprised if the work of the Lord goes slow. In the New Testament, THE PRAYER GATHERING WAS THE TIME WHERE ALL THE WORK WAS ORIGINATED. Now I have got a lot to say about this later on.

But let us come right back to the beginning. Nothing whatever in that which is of God begins with man. When this tabernacle was to be made, first of all, the pattern came from Heaven. That was a revelation of Jesus Christ. But, even then, the Lord did not say, 'Now put this pattern into the hands of the people and let them get on with the work.' It says that the Spirit of God filled two men, and it was by the Spirit of God filling these two men that all the work was produced. They were anointed by the Spirit of God, it says, "unto all the manner of work." Whether it was this kind of work, or that kind of work, or another kind of work

in relation to the tabernacle, it all came through the Spirit of God. Jesus Himself did not begin His great work until He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. It says, "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit." And if Jesus Who was born of the Spirit, and lived a good, a perfect life up to thirty years of age, if He needed the anointing for the work of God, surely we do.

There is a difference between being born of the Spirit, and being anointed by the Spirit. To be born of the Spirit is to be brought into the new life, to be made a child of God, to enter into the Kingdom. But the anointing has to do with the work of God. We need anointing for the work of God. These two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, were anointed. It says, "filled with the Spirit unto all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:1-6).

This tabernacle in the wilderness, when it was finished was the work of the Holy Spirit, passed from the type to the anti-type, passed from the tabernacle in the wilderness to the Lord Jesus, THE TRUE TABERNACLE, and every detail about Him is the work of the Holy Spirit. And if the Lord said to Moses, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." Now He says, just as particularly about the work of God, "See, that thou make all things according to My Son." Every detail has got to be according to Christ.

You notice that God never left anything to the mind of man. It was made known that many kinds of things would be required. Gold for the things of gold, silver for the things of silver, the different colors and the different kinds of fabric. No one ever said, 'Now if you [have] got any kind of material, just bring it along and we will fit it in.' No woman came along and said, 'Now I have got some good material, just use this for the curtain.' Bezaleel and Aholiab would have said, 'But that is not the right color, that is silver, and for this purpose I need gold.' Nobody was allowed to come along and say, 'Now I have got something for this job, and I am prepared to give it. You just take it and use it.'

The Spirit of God was saying, is this thing of Christ? Is it an expression of Christ? It is not what you think about this work of God. Not your ideas and your judgments, not how you do things in the world. It is, Has it come from Heaven by the Spirit of God? Have you waited on God to get it from Him? That is how it has always been in the beginning. That is how it was in the beginning of THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

I have dealt with a lot of beginnings this morning. I have not got as far as I thought I would get, but I do hope that you are seeing more than I am saying. Everything that is not of Christ is going to be dissolved. Make no mistake. This whole structure of Christianity is going to be tested according to Christ. Christianity is just going to be tested as to how far it was the work of the Holy Spirit of God according to Christ. Yet once again, says the Lord, "I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." The things which can be shaken shall be removed. The things which cannot be shaken shall abide. And what is it that abides forever? Not the tabernacle in the wilderness, but Jesus Christ. ALL and only ALL that is Christ will remain.

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