

Jesus Came to Form a New Heavenly Israel

by T. Austin-Sparks

Jesus formed a new, spiritual, and heavenly Israel, based on spiritual principles and built upon the greatness of the Lord Jesus.

Scripture: Matthew 21:43, John 1:12

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "New Covenant"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that Jesus came to establish a new, heavenly Israel, marking a significant shift in God's plan as the old Israel was set aside. He explains that the teachings and works of Jesus were aimed at forming a spiritual kingdom, distinct from the earthly nation of Israel, and that this new Israel is built upon the foundation of Christ's glory and sacrifice. Sparks highlights that the new Israel consists of those who receive Christ, becoming children of God, and that this transformation is rooted in God's supernatural work. He draws parallels between the old and new Israel, illustrating how God's principles remain unchanged despite the shift in His chosen people. Ultimately, he calls believers to recognize their identity as part of this new Israel and to live in accordance with the dignity bestowed upon them.

Transcript

We began last night by pointing out a very great truth. It is: that all the teaching and all the works of the Lord Jesus when He was on earth related to one of the greatest crises in history. That crisis was the removal of Israel as a nation from the eyes of the Lord for at least this whole dispensation. That crisis had already begun when Jesus commenced His ministry. And it was sealed and established when Jesus finished His ministry. The nation of Israel, which had held the central place in the interest of God in this world for many hundreds of years, was then being set aside. The prophets had foretold that that would happen. And it began to happen when Jesus came into His ministry in this world. When John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, and the multitudes went out to him, he saw the Pharisees and the Sadducees coming. These were the representatives of all Israel. And he said to them, "You generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father:' for God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones." That is only another way of saying, that those children of Abraham were rejected.

Now this is a very important thing when you read the four Gospels. Everything that is in the four Gospels relates to this great crisis. On the one hand, there was the rejection and the removal of a people that had been called the people of God for many centuries. As we said last night, that is what Israel as a nation has

been through all these nearly two thousand years. But that is only one side of the story. Jesus had come to do a new thing. And by His teaching and His works He was showing what the new thing is. And that new thing has been going on all through these two thousand years. It is going on today. It is going on in this very hall. The thing which Jesus began to do - and is still doing - was and is the formation of a new, heavenly, spiritual Israel. While that nation which bore that name is removed from God's sight, God never gives up His idea. And Jesus came to take up that thought of God about a new Israel. If you carefully read the Gospels, you will see that Jesus took up all that was of God in the old Israel, and brought it over in a spiritual way into a new Israel. For instance, Israel of old was God's Kingdom in this world. Amongst the kingdoms of this world, Israel was God's Kingdom. That is dismissed with Israel.

But the idea of the Kingdom is introduced again with Jesus Christ in a new way. Jesus said to Israel, "The Kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." So the first words of Jesus, when He began to preach, were: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This is a new Kingdom that He is building. This Kingdom is a spiritual and heavenly Kingdom. Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." But that does not make it any the less real. Indeed, this SPIRITUAL KINGDOM is a far more real thing than the old temporal kingdom. But, you see, the first thing that is taken over by Jesus is God's intention to have a Kingdom. Matthew prefers to call it "the Kingdom of Heaven," John prefers to call it "the Kingdom of God." We will not take the time to discuss whether there is any difference. The fact is, that it is a Kingdom. It is God's Kingdom. And it is a Heavenly Kingdom.

Then you notice that the old Israel was built upon the twelve sons of Jacob. Twelve is the number of representation. Those twelve sons of Jacob represented the whole nation. Jesus chose twelve disciples. They were a representative company of the new Israel. Moses had seventy elders that went up into the mount with him. Jesus chose seventy apostles and sent them out two by two.

Israel of old had a tabernacle. John says, "The Word became flesh, and Tabernacled among us." Jesus is the Tabernacle of the new Jerusalem. It is in Him that we meet God. And in Him all the spiritual meaning of the old tabernacle is come to fulfillment. Israel of old had a high priest. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus is the High Priest of the new Israel. Israel had the great sacrifice, the whole burnt offering. Jesus has become THE GREAT SACRIFICE. Israel had a great altar. The Cross of the Lord Jesus is THE GREAT ALTAR of the new Israel. And so we could go on. But, I think, we have said enough to indicate that Jesus came to form a new heavenly Israel.

Now, when God began the formation of the old Israel, He began with Abraham. And Stephen tells us that the God of glory appeared unto Abraham when he was in Ur of the Chaldees. Do you notice the title given to God? "The God of glory appeared." That was the beginning of the old earthly Israel. The beginning of the new spiritual Israel is on the same principles. You open your Gospel by John, at the first chapter, and after that wonderful description of the Son of God, John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father." That is where the new Israel began. The God of glory appeared. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it." We do not know exactly when that was, or where that was, but somehow Abraham saw the day of Jesus Christ and was glad. That is always a mark of glory. Where there is glory, there is always rejoicing. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2). And it is as though the Apostle John was singing a song when he opened his Gospel: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I am surprised that there is not a smile on every face in this hall, "full of grace and truth." Surely that is glory. Surely that is something to make us rejoice. The Grace of God has appeared in Jesus Christ. But we must get on.

Will you just look for a moment at those first verses in John's Gospel? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not." And verses eleven through thirteen: "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." THE WORD WAS GOD. And they that were His own received Him not. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God, to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (KJV; NASV). So the new Israel is introduced. It is formed of those who received Him, and to whom He has given the right to be the sons of God. That is something better than was ever true of the old Israel. Here is introduced the greatest idea that has ever been revealed from heaven, and the idea is that our God is to have sons of God. First of all, you see the Son, and then the sons, and the sons with the Son form the new Israel.

Now I want you to turn to another part of the New Testament. It is, listen to me, it is the Book in the New Testament which embodies the whole of this truth of the new heavenly Israel. If I were to ask you, 'What is that book?' I wonder what you would say. What book in the New Testament gathers up into itself everything about the new heavenly Israel? It is the Letter to the Hebrews. It is interesting that it has that name, because it is all about the new Israel. Will you please open your Bibles at the Letter to the Hebrews? We have seen that John introduces the new Israel with a presentation of the Son of God. Now this great letter to the Hebrews begins with a presentation of the Son of God. It has eight wonderful things to say about Him, but let us begin.

And we begin with God. God is always the beginning. Well, what about God? "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." Now, what does that mean? I am trying to be very simple for the sake of the young people. That just means this: that God has gathered up all His old ways of speaking into One Person. In old times, He spoke in various portions and in different ways. Now, at the end of those times, He has gathered it altogether in His Son. That is the first thing about the Son. He is the final and the full speech of God. After this, God will not speak again. At the end of these days, He has spoken, and that is final. Reject the Lord Jesus, and God has no more to say to you. But in His Son, God has everything to say. He gathers together all His speech in His Son. Christ is final, and Christ is full, as to the mind of God.

I do not know whether you have the saying in Chinese, or in the other languages which you represent, but in England, we sometimes speak about the person and say, he or she is speaking their mind. That is, they are letting you know what they are thinking. Now in that way, in His Son, God has spoken His mind. And having spoken His mind in His Son, He has said, 'That is all I have got to say to you.' Well, that is the first thing. God has spoken unto us in His Son.

The second thing: "Whom He appointed heir of all things." As we said yesterday, at some time God said, 'I appoint My Son to be heir of all things.' And when God makes an appointment, nobody can set it aside. So He gathered up His created universe, and put it into His Son as His Son's inheritance, "Whom He appointed heir of all things."

The third thing: "By Whom He made the ages." The Son was employed by the Father for the making of the ages. That is what John said at the beginning, "through Whom He made all things." The Son was the Father's instrument in creation. "All things were created by Him." Of course, we usually speak about God as the Creator, and we sometimes overlook this fact that God did it through His Son.

Now, the fourth thing: "Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." That simply means that the Son is the full expression of the Father. Jesus said, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." He is the full expression of God.

The fifth thing: "And upholding all things by the Word of His power." That is a tremendous thing to say of anybody. There is ONE PERSON in this created universe Who is upholding all things by the Word of His power. The world cannot go to pieces until Jesus Christ says the time has come for that. Let there be as many atom bombs as man can create. Everything is going to hold together until Jesus says it can go. He upholds all things by the Word of His power.

The next thing, number six: "When He had made purification for sins." Out of glory, into creation, and then redeeming creation by His blood, making purification of sins. My, that could hold us for many hours, but we have to go on.

The next thing, number seven: "When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." He took His seat at the right hand of God, and that is where He is now, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The right hand is the place of honor. The right hand is the place of power. And that is where the Son is. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Now, number eight: "Having become so much better than the angels." He is Superior to all the angels. Now, of course, I would like to stop to put in about an hour on angels. But you just go through your Bible, and see how mighty they are. What tremendous things one angel could do. A mighty army came against Israel once, and they besieged the city, and they vaunted themselves and spoke of how great they were. No one had ever been able to stand against them. All right, you mighty Assyrian armies. It says that God sent an angel, just one angel. And when men arose in the morning, the whole mighty army was dead. And the captain of the army went home without his army. Only one angel. Angels are mighty beings. And they are a mighty host. Jesus said, "If I were to ask My Father, He would send Me twelve legions of angels" (Matt. 26:53).

Now, here it says, that Jesus is Superior to all the angels. Why have I said all this? Not just for a Bible study. Of course, it is all very interesting. But we have one object. We are talking about this new heavenly Israel. And this new heavenly Israel, which the Lord is now building, rests upon the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Until we understand something of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, we cannot understand what we are called to as members of this heavenly Israel. What a wonderful Israel this must be, if it is built upon such a One as He is! If all this that we have been saying about Jesus, the Son of God, is the foundation of Israel, how great a thing this Israel must be!

Now, Christ has this place by God's own act. Earlier, we quoted Matthew twenty one, and verse forty three: "The kingdom of Heaven shall be taken away from You, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Now, if you look at that verse in Matthew twenty one, you will see that it follows something very impressive. It follows this quotation from the Old Testament: "THIS IS THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, Which has become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes." Israel rejected This Stone, and Israel was rejected in turn. But This Stone was appointed Head of the corner by God. And, therefore, Head of the corner He will be. He is the Headstone, the corner of this new Israel.

Now my time is practically gone, and I have not gotten anywhere. I wanted to take you further along this line of the correspondence between the new, and the old, on spiritual principles. I will try to get something

more of this important thing into the next ten minutes.

We are saying that the new spiritual Israel follows in principle the line of the old Israel. We have seen that the beginning of the old was in the appearing of the God of glory. So it is with the new. But what was it that the God of glory said to Abraham? "I will make of thee a great nation." "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." What was the first seed of Abraham? It was Isaac. Isaac was a miracle in his birth. He could never have been at all but for a miracle of God. But this is our point: Isaac must go down into death and come up on the ground of resurrection. Why was that? Why did Isaac have to go into death? And I think everybody here knows the story of Isaac. When God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and offer him a sacrifice." Isaac had to go into death. And in type, Isaac had to be raised from the dead. Why was that? You see, God's principles are eternal. The means that He uses may change from time to time, but His principles are always the same. And this going down into death of Isaac, and being raised as from the dead, was in order to keep everything on supernatural ground. His birth was supernatural, but now his life work was to be supernatural; it must all be on God's ground only.

Now, I expect, I think I know that there are some doctors here tonight. You can do a lot for people while they are alive. And we thank the Lord for all that you can do for us while we are alive. We say, 'While there is life, there is hope.' And we never give up until the last breath has been breathed. But when that last breath has gone out of the body, all the doctors have to walk out. You might bring all the doctors from all over the world into that room, all the cleverest doctors that there are, they may all have wonderful names and reputations, but when they look at that body, they all have to say, 'We can do nothing. All our learning and all our knowledge and all our skill is as nothing. He is dead. Nobody can do anything at all.' Now you see, if that one is really raised from the dead, that is something more than natural. That is supernatural. And only God can do that. There is no other being in this universe who can do that. And if anybody is raised from the dead, that is God's work only. That is why Isaac had to die and be raised. Because this Israel that was coming through Isaac had to be something of God only. Nothing of man about this. All man's education, and all man's skill, is put out. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God." Every member of this new Israel has to be on that ground.

Dear friends, the deepest reality about a child of God is the most wonderful thing in this universe. The deepest thing is this, that there is something there in that life which only God could do. No man, or number of men, can make a child of God. There is nothing in this universe that can make a child of God. Only God can make a child of God. So that this new spiritual heavenly Israel is something which in its very beginning is on supernatural ground. We are a wonderful lot of people. We do not look like very much. Of course, I do not mean to insult you, I include myself. We do not look like very much. In this world, we are not very much. But God has in this world the most wonderful thing that He has done. He has a people which are of the result of His own unique Divine work. That is the beginning of the new Israel.

You see, we are right back with Abraham and Isaac as the beginning of this thing. God has brought that over into this new Israel. That is the beginning. Oh, that the Lord would give us spiritual understanding about this. I had thought that I might be able to say something about how true this is of the Christian life after its beginning. But if the Lord wills, I have got another evening tomorrow, and we can go on then.

Oh, but we have said enough surely to make it very clear that Christ is doing a very wonderful thing. Our name is Israel. That means a prince with God. May the Lord help us to live up to our name, recognize the great dignity that has been put upon us, and to understand the wonderful thing that He has done in us. The Lord bless you.

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