

Let the House Be Builded - Part 1 of 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores God's all-inclusive purpose through the metaphor of the house, emphasizing His eternal presence and commitment to His creation.

Duration: 53:36

Scripture: Psalm 132:13-14, John 2:19-21, Ephesians 2:19-22, Colossians 2:16-17, Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 9:11-14, Revelation 21:3

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's all-inclusive purpose. He highlights that while Christianity has many aspects, such as evangelism, teaching, and prophetic matters, these can sometimes become separate entities and cause Christians to lose sight of God's supreme objective. The speaker urges believers to seek after and know what God has instigated and committed himself to, despite the difficulties and challenges they may face. The sermon emphasizes the need to keep God's overarching purpose in view and to recognize that God commits himself wholly to the fulfillment of his intention.

Transcript

I think it is quite unnecessary for me to spend any time by way of introduction in speaking of the object of these meetings, but rather shall we let the meetings speak for themselves. and the message which we have defined the nature of our gathering. So let us immediately come to the point.

What we have in view is what we believe to be God's all-inclusive purpose. Christianity has many aspects and Christian people are occupied with those various aspects. Evangelism, teaching and building up Christians, contending for the faith.

There are movements which are entirely occupied with prophetic matters relating to the coming again of Christ and so on. All these are right, but they can and often do become things in themselves. And while being so good and right, they very often make Christians into sections.

Circling round some interpretation or some teaching or some specific object. And the inclusive and supreme object of God in and through and over all is very often lost sight of. It is that we might seek to bring that object more definitely into view that we are coming together in these evenings.

Our concern then is with God's inclusive object. And I'm sure that you will agree with me that the value of any one aspect or side of teaching or work will very largely be governed by its relationship to the whole purpose of God. And the value will be more immediate if that whole purpose is seen and kept all the time in view.

God does not commit himself wholly to any one part of his purpose. He only commits himself wholly to the all of his intention. And so we desire to find God committing himself.

It does really become necessary for us to know that to which he will commit himself. The inclusive object to which we refer is inherent in the words which we are taking for our background from the chapter which has been read this evening. The few simple words from Ezra chapter 6 and verse 3. Let the house be built.

That is God's all-inclusive object. You notice that Ezra traced this decree back through and beyond the instrument, the ruler who made it. He traced it back to God.

He pointed out that this decree while made by an earthly ruler originated with God. He said God put it into the heart of the king. This came from God.

And being shown that it originated with God, the rest of the story shows how God committed himself in sovereign ways to that thing. God instigated this. God supported this.

God consummated this in spite of numerous and great difficulties. If that is true, we want to discover where that can be true in our time. How that can be true.

The one thing that I believe all Christians, true Christians, people of God, would seek after and know in our time is that which God has instigated. That which God takes upon himself to support and see through. That which in spite of everything, a great vast everything, God will finish it.

I say it is that that we want to discover. How God will commit himself. Now that brings us to a vital and fundamental principle of biblical interpretation.

A thing that everybody who handles the Bible ought to recognize. And this ought always to be present when we take up our Bible. It is simply the eternity of God.

That perhaps does not convey very much to you as I say it. But the great fact that there is no time with God. All time as it is with us is present time with God.

There is no past, present, future with God. He is the eternal God. From eternity to eternity thou art God.

God may accommodate himself to the time periods of men and their selves. But he himself dwells in eternity. His thoughts are eternal thoughts.

His purpose is an eternal purpose. The architect has the whole plan before him. The builder only has the day to day part or parts.

Those who only see the parts may be confused. They may not understand. They may even begin to make the part the whole.

A writer of one of the New Testament letters or documents introduced his thesis in this way. God who at sundry times and in different manners spake unto the fathers through the prophets. God did speak in times and different times.

In different manners and different portions. But with God the whole from eternity to eternity was present. And every part that came from God had the whole in it.

You must ever remember that when you are handling the Bible. Otherwise you will wrongly divide the word of truth. The full design of God governs every part where he is concerned.

God's mind does not grow. There is no progress with God. He is full and complete and final at all times.

God has brought his thoughts into time by means of models and figures. But they are only models and figures of spiritual and eternal realities. And the principle is this.

That whatever comes from God at any time from our standpoint. From this world's standpoint. Whatever comes from God has in it the eternal and complete thought of God.

It has in it the whole of the spiritual mind of God. We have to look through the immediate form of presentation to discover that spiritual and eternal thought that lies there. This house.

Let the house be built. This house is only an earthly, temporary, limited representation of the vast, eternal, spiritual thought of God. A poor representation.

It will pass. But God's thought will never pass. What lies behind it will have no end.

It has come out of eternity. It will go on to eternity. Now the whole Bible is just a manifold expression of this principle.

Beginning to end the Bible in its numerous forms of presentation and representation. Type, symbol, figure. The whole Bible is one comprehensive expression in numerous and various ways of this one idea that lies here inherent in this word house.

Let us get behind the figure. Behind the representation to the great spiritual truth. The reality.

Here it is. Out from eternity. Out from unknowableness.

Out from incomprehensibleness. Out from inaccessibility. God resolved to presence himself in a creation of his own making.

In something which amongst many other titles and designations is called a house. God determined to come out from all that. Vast, unknowable, inaccessible, eternal.

And presence himself. Presence himself to make himself known. To make himself accessible.

To dwell in a house. But as we take hold of that truth. For it's a truth.

From the beginning of the Bible to the end. That is the truth that is running all the way through. That is the thing that is governing everything as we shall see, I think, as we proceed.

As we take hold of that great truth. And move with it through the Bible. All the way through.

We begin to make a discovery about it. That while it is a wonderful idea. An amazing thought.

It is something much more than a thought and an idea. But something very much of the heart of God. Not only of his mind.

But of his heart. Something greatly cherished by God. Something with which God's greatest interests are bound up.

It turns out, if I may put it like that. It turns out to be not something objective to God himself at all. But a very part of himself.

An organic expression of himself. Of his thought. Of his heart.

Of his will. I think that one of the most staggering statements in the Bible is this. The church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

God purchased this thing called the church with his own blood. That will defeat and defy every attempt to comprehend and balance. Blood is the very vitality of any organism.

This thing. I am calling it that for the moment. This thing has the very life of God bound up with it.

God has given his life for it. There is something more than a matter of objective interest. The very heart of God is in this.

His own life. Himself. Himself.

What is it? This thought? This thing so near to the heart of God with which all his interests are bound up? It is God present amongst men. God related to an organism as the inhabitant. The occupier.

The indweller of that organism. That surely is the simple plain meaning of a house. It is something to be dwelt in.

To be lived in. It has no meaning unless it is inhabited. God's thought.

You may call it house or what you like. The Bible has many names for it. God's thought is this.

To be there. Present. Indwelling.

With the object of making himself known and understood. And with the object of having blessed fellowship with that which comprises the house. I have said that the Bible contains the history of that thought through the ages.

Yes. The Bible therefore throughout and entirely is the embodiment of this one eternal divine concept. It begins with a very simple primal expression of the thought in a garden.

The man and the woman and God present. Walking in the garden. Talking.

Communing. Making his thoughts and intentions known. A picture of happy fellowship between God and man.

Man and God. Man in relationship with God. In terms, may I use the word, of friendship.

And on a basis of commission. To be God's regent here. For the development and fulfillment of his purposes.

Everything speaks of peace. And order. And beauty.

And all that the human heart longs for. It's there in this simple first representation. God has created for himself a house.

And is in it. And is walking in it. And talking in it.

From that point, this divine intention has a long and chequered history. All the actions of God are related to that thing, remember. And all the reactions in history that we have in the Bible are against that one thing.

To drive God out. To exclude God. To make a condition to which God cannot permit himself.

Where he cannot be present. That's the Bible. It focuses upon this one eternal desire of the heart.

But where does it end? Yes, it is a long and chequered history through which this intention passes. But in the end, it's realized. And it is realized in two ways.

Firstly, it is realized in himself as incarnate in himself. We have not yet recognized the supreme significance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Until we have recognized that in him this eternal conception finds its realization.

He is Emmanuel. God with us. God has reached his object.

He himself has made for himself an abode. God was in Christ. Reconciling the world unto him.

In that first and fundamental way, God reaches his end. And we discover that the house is not an it. It's a him.

It's a person. And then he proceeds from the one to the many. From the individual to the corporate.

And an elect body is brought into view in terms of a dwelling place for God. The end of the Bible. Again, the end of the Bible is again in symbolism as much as the beginning was a city and a garden.

And the music of these words. The tabernacle of God is with men. And he will dwell with them.

They shall be his people and he will be their God. That's where your Bible ends. History is consummated.

Well, I have said that this divine intention explains the Bible from every angle. All the actions and all the reactions are centered in this one thing. That God may have a place for himself.

And be there in these terms of fellowship and peace. I say again, there is nothing in the Bible that is not related to this all-governing purpose and thought of God. Here is the object of God's concern.

And of God's jealousy. If God was jealous over a temple in Jerusalem or over Jerusalem or Zion. As the prophet so strongly said, think you that his jealousy was exhausted in an earthly temporary representation of something? Nay, it was because of the something represented that God was jealous.

And it was this. What then is the house of God's question is raised. Isaiah raised it.

Thus said Jehovah, Heaven is my throne. The earth my footstool. What manner of house will ye build unto me? And what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made.

You remember Stephen in that magnificent message which cost him his life. So significant in this very connection. Quoted these words from Isaiah.

It was almost the culmination of that great discourse. Working up, heading up to this. He says, Acts chapter 7, if you know, verses 48 to 50.

Solomon built himself up. What manner of house will ye build me? Said the Lord. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

What manner of house. There are some things there to take note of. Firstly, it is an intimation of the infinite, infinite greatness of God requiring something infinitely great.

No magnificent temple of Solomon or any other builder can answer to this demand. It requires something very great. That, in other words, which will show off the greatness of God.

The Apostle Paul, more than anyone else in the Bible, saw the meaning of this house. And exhausted all the language at his command to try and speak about it. And you know the Greek language is a very comprehensive language.

It has a tremendous number of words and ideas. Far, far more than our English. Paul was hard put to it with his knowledge and command of that language to put into expression this house.

The breadth and the length and the height and the depth. The unsearchable. These words, this language with which he is wrestling, cannot express how great this is.

But, note, and here is the wonderful thing. Where we are getting very near to it or it is getting very near to us. There are two or three things that the Apostle Paul makes perfectly clear as defining the nature and purpose of this house.

Firstly, that it is that in which this knowledge surpassing love of God is manifested. God conceived this object in order that in it the knowledge surpassing love of his heart should be manifested. And then Paul passes on to grace.

The riches of his grace. The glory of his grace. And he brings that all into relationship with this house.

That in the ages to come in that house, body, call it what you will, in that the infinite grace of God should be displayed to a wandering universe. He does not stop there. He passes to wisdom.

The infinite wisdom of God to be shown to principalities and powers in this house. It wants a big house to comprehend that. The greatness of his love.

The greatness of his grace. The greatness of his wisdom. God present in such terms of self-manifestation.

This is not all language. You have it. It's here plainly stated in the scripture.

But I must pause there because another thing is implied here. It is the implied misapprehension of man. Man has a way, you know, of catching on with big ideas.

Wonderful conceptions. And taking hold of them. Man has got the idea.

He's taken it up. This idea of a house for God. A dwelling for God.

But man has given it a twist and brought into it a false interpretation. Man has tried to capture God and put him into a house of man's own making. By so doing, limiting God.

Confining God. Possessing God. And making God exclusive to some particular house made by man.

A building on the earth. An institution. Something like that.

And then this terrible propensity of man to make God his property. And the property of his particular kind of house. The uprise of a terrible exclusivism.

That if you don't belong here, go this way. Then you're outside the pale. See what I mean? Idea taken hold of but misapplied.

A false interpretation. You see, that was Israel's tragic blunder. Against which the prophets raged and stalled.

It was that into which Jesus came. And like new wine in old wineskins, burst the whole thing. But in so doing, lost his life.

They had made God's house an exclusive thing. Their own. They possessed God.

That was their blunder. And as Jesus was walking away into the eternal spiritual reality, he said, Your house is left unto you desolate. Your house.

Your house. That's an awful indictment. Your house.

We must take this all very seriously because it was, from one point of view, in relation to this misapprehension, false interpretation, this caricature, that Jesus came to correct it. He did so in two ways. We have pointed out, firstly, he corrected it in his own person.

In his own person. Do you want to see the house of God? What it is? Look at him. And then he did it in his teaching.

The gospel by John, if you did but recognize it, stands in the whole biblical purpose to show how Jesus supplants and transcends all earthly and material representation. It makes perfectly clear that he supplants and takes the place of the temple in Jerusalem. He supplanted and took the place of the priesthood.

Became the high priest himself and offered himself a sacrifice acceptable to God. Thus, not only fulfilling all types, but showing that God had never been satisfied until Christ offered himself. He supplanted and transcended all the Jewish feasts.

You notice how through John's gospel the feasts of the Jews are constantly referred to and Jesus figures in them, over against them. Jesus takes the place of the manna in the wilderness and is the bread of God. Come down from heaven.

Jesus takes the place of the water from the smitten rock and says, He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. He that believeth on me out of him shall flow rivers of living water. He takes the place of the knights in the temple and says, I am the light of the world.

He takes the place of all the old shepherds of Israel and says, I am the good shepherd. He takes the place of Israel and builds a new flock out of his own blood. I lay down my life.

Yes, Jesus is the answer to God's eternal quest. But Jesus, as the New Testament goes on to show, does not stand alone. Jesus' incorporate organic expression is the house of God.

Where and what is the house of God? It is where there is spiritual, organic, vital union with Christ. No more, no less. For we were all baptized in one spirit into one body.

Jesus fulfills all the functions and expresses all the features of God's presence. God's presence in the midst of men. This is a statement, but this is a challenge.

Not knowing how great is his house, but how spiritually definite is his house. It is built upon the love of God. That's testing enough.

The very object and purpose, let me repeat, of this house is for the expression of the love of God. And if that love of God is not present, is contradicted, the house ceases to be what God intended it to be. The explanation of Israel, who were once called God's house as a nation.

The explanation of why they were set aside. Here is the infinite love of God brought into this world in the person of his Son. And what does he mean? Infinite hate.

Love cast out. Your house is left unto you desolate. The infinite grace of God.

All this theology and doctrine about justification not by works, but by faith and so on. It can be so cold after all. It can become legalistic and righteous in a sense of hardness.

But remember that all that is there in the word of God in order to magnify the grace of God. Not of works. The grace of God.

The house of God, dear friends, therefore exists on the basis that men and women have discovered first of all that their deepest and most terrible need is the grace of God. And they have come into the knowledge of that grace. And the one word uppermost in their vocabulary is grace.

It's the most wonderful word in the language of earth and heaven. Grace. Grace.

Grace. It's that that constitutes the house of God. You and I are living in the meaning of that wonderful word, grace.

God is very near to us. That's where we shall find him. God beholdeth the proud afar off because the proud have no sense of their need of grace.

Pride is an abomination to God simply because it is such a contradiction to the grace of God. To this man will I look. Here's your house of God.

Him that is of a broken, a humble, a content, that trembles at my word. That's the atmosphere of the house of God. And so you see it is not a thing.

It is not a place. It is not something that man makes. It is a spiritual thing.

On what ground does it rest? It rests on the ground of the cross. The house ever came after the altar and stood as the background to the altar. The church of the New Testament is the background to the cross.

It comes by the cross. The cross, what does it do? It sets aside man and makes room for God. It puts man out that God may be all and in all.

The intention of the cross is to make possible the realization of God's eternal thought to be there where the cross is wrought most deeply into the life of a people. There most fully you will meet the Lord. You will not meet the Lord in uncrucified men and women.

In the presence of the flesh God stands back. I close with asking one more question. What then is the dominant necessity? The answer is twofold.

The dominant necessity for the realization of God's desire bringing in of this house in it's beauty, in it's love, in it's grace, in it's fellowship, in it's peace, in it's order, in it's divine manifestation is a Christ consciousness. A Christ consciousness. Oh, that does not convey much I know as it's stated.

Dear friends, what you and I need more than anything else perhaps is more of this Christ consciousness. Are we not ever and always rebuked when we hear Paul saying, the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that one died for all, therefore all died that they which live should henceforth live not unto themselves but unto him. Henceforth again we know no man after the flesh.

I say we are always rebuked by that. I am, you not, do we not know one another so much after that. Instead of laying hold on whatever there may be even remotely of Christ in one another and making the most of that, we do the other thing.

We make the most of one another's faults and weaknesses and un-Christ-likeness, and there's plenty of it, God knows, but all for this Christ consciousness. That we would give ourselves more to this than laying hold of what there is, be it very small of Christ and making the most of that. Christ consciousness.

The house will be built. God will find his house and commit himself if we will do that. God has done.

And having said Christ consciousness, it means house consciousness. House consciousness. Is that the wrong word? It's fellowship consciousness.

It's relatedness consciousness. That we are members one of another. And the hand cannot say to the foot, I don't need you, I can do without you.

Call it house, call it body, call it what you will. It's this corporate consciousness that is needed today to destroy, destroy all this disintegrating, divisive kind of thing. Well, we must leave it there tonight.

But word to God that something of the impact of this might come upon our hearts. Lift us out of our all too small conceptions of God's house and govern our attitudes in relation to all, all who rest upon the love of God, all who rest upon the grace of God, all who have come to see and to acknowledge that it is by the wisdom and only by the wisdom of God in solving all the human problems, their own and others, that God will at last find what he is seeking, a place.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0049.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/let-the-house-be-built-part-1-of3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net