

Men Whose Eyes Have Seen the King - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Church must recover the consciousness and conviction of Christ's kingship and allow Christ to transform their lives, as Paul did, to fulfill their vocation and bring Christ into human lives.

Duration: 43:16

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, Ezekiel 1:26, Matthew 6:33, Acts 26:16, Romans 8:19, 1 Corinthians 15:25, 2 Corinthians 4:4

Topics: "Seeing Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Jesus reigning until all His enemies are under His feet, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:25. The speaker highlights the vision of Ezekiel, who saw a throne in heaven with a man on it, representing Jesus. The speaker also references the apostle Paul's experience in Damascus and Arabia, where he gained a deeper understanding of the Bible and saw God's intention for mankind to have dominion and reign in glory. The speaker emphasizes that the current state of suffering, evil, and misery in the world is contrary to God's intention and should motivate the church to seek the realization of God's glory in their lives.

Transcript

It is always a very dangerous thing for me to say that I will try to be brief. Many of you have good reason to be skeptical. But it is at any rate in my heart to try and gather into a few words the predominant note and message of this conference.

And as a key to that, I turn you to the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, at verse 25. He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. Our eyes have been turned in these hours to that throne, seen by Ezekiel through the opened heavens with a man, the appearance as of a man upon it about.

And we have seen, I trust, a little of the truth. That everything, everything that follows is just the expression and manifestation of that throne. And the absolute exaltation of the Lord Jesus above all things.

Now when Paul wrote these words, we have just read, he was not thinking of some future time when Christ would reign and put all his enemies under his feet. He was not thinking of Jesus as waiting for a time to come when something would be done that would put him in that position and bring about that result. Whenever Paul, or for that matter, any of the apostles, referred to Christ's exaltation and lordship, he and they always regarded it and spoke of it as a present thing.

They looked on into the future, saw something more of its outworking, but to them it was not a future thing in its beginning or in its actuality. To them it was now. And when he said he must reign, he meant he is reigning and must continue to reign until he has made all his enemies, or put all his enemies under his feet.

That is the thing that has to be recovered in our consciousness and in our conviction. That is the thing which has to be restored to its place in the Church's life and the Church's consciousness continually. For to a very large extent, while the Church adheres to the doctrine of the exaltation of Christ, his kingship and lordship, the reality, the power, and the consciousness of it has been lost to a very large extent.

Church, in the beginning, lived in the consciousness and in the power of the fact, as it was to them, that Jesus was on the throne. Undoubtedly, unquestionably, he was on the throne. He was Lord of all.

Peter affirmed it. He is Lord of all. Paul said God did set him far above all rule and authority.

It's something accomplished. That was their view of the matter. That was their conviction.

That was their consciousness. And it was so powerful with them as to affect every aspect of their lives. It was so at the beginning.

And until that is as true, as true in the life and realization of the Church in our time, the same results and effects will not be found in the Church or through the Church. Believe me, dear friends, that if the progress of the Gospel, if the mighty impact and registration of Christ at that time, was such as to not allow a comparison with the deplorable state today in the Church, it was due to this one thing. You wish to trace the secret of their power, their influence, their progress, their onward march in spite of a world of terrible hostility, persecution, martyrdom, and every other kind of adversity.

They marched forward terrible as an army with banners, described as the people who had turned the world upside down. You wish to discover the secret. You'll find it here.

He must reign. He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. He is reigning.

Now I could do nothing, I know quite well, to straighten your conviction as to the truth as a truth, but that's where we are left so helpless. We can but emphasize the matter and are cast so much upon the Holy Spirit to make the thing live. Nevertheless, nevertheless, we can be called back.

We can be warned. We can be counseled. We can be exalted.

And as far as that can be, it shall be tonight. Let us get into this thing a little more deeply. We have said that for the apostles the reign of Christ had already begun.

It did obtain in their time. How did they come to that conviction, to that knowledge? We will for our purpose keep to the man whose words we have extracted, the man Paul. Paul's knowledge of Christ as reigning sprang out of his personal experience of that fact.

He had had an encounter in his life with the reigning, the glorified Lord. And the Lord from heaven had had an encounter with him. It had become something in his own personal experience, history, and life.

Yes, it was something very personal. It has to be that. Until it is that, it can be very theoretical.

It has to be personally experimental. And it was with Paul. In that encounter on the way to Damascus, two very personal words had been used.

And I think it all centers in that fact. First of all, Paul had been spoken to by his own personal name. Saul.

Saul. His own name called and reiterated. He is being nailed down to this personal level.

He is not getting away with it. He is not being allowed to mistake what he hears. It's being directed to the man in his own personal name.

He is not mixed up in a crowd. He is not just met in a teaching. It has come right straight at him.

As a man. As an individual. Saul.

Saul. Dear friends, while I am not suggesting, we have all to have the same form of encounter. We have all to have the same crisis.

That is, we are all to have and can have a point in our life when we come face to face with the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. And there is the crisis upon which all the future turns. It is a tremendous thing to come face to face with the lordship.

It's a greater thing than coming face to face with the saviourhood. There are many people who are saved by the saviour and own him as saviour. But whose lives are seriously lacking in the power of lordship.

Of his lordship. That's a statement, we leave it. And then the other very personal word was when he said, Who art thou, Lord? The answer came, I am Jesus.

And lest Saul should prevaricate and try to evade dead round by saying, Yes, but our country is full of men by that name. Which Jesus do you mean? The Lord safeguarded by saying, Whom thou persecutest. The Jesus whom thou persecutest.

That's the one I am. And Saul knew who that one was. He knew who that one was.

He had but one Jesus in all his thoughts and in all his plans. And that one Jesus, he was determined to blot out and wipe out of the world's memory. He was out to eradicate every trace of that Jesus.

He knew that one right enough. It was filling his consciousness at this very time. I am Jesus.

The one that you are persecuting. See how possible the Lord made this matter. Brought it right home to the man himself and then to the very purpose of his life.

The very thing to which he had dedicated, consecrated all his strength of mind and body for its destruction. Brought it right home there. I am Jesus.

Something like that, something like that is necessary, is really necessary. If the after results in his life are to have any kind of repetition in the church and in us, that he has got to make this a matter where we are not just one of a multitude, but a matter where we personally and individually have come under his personal domination and lordship. Absolutely.

And our whole life, our whole life, yet all our ambitions, all our enterprises, all our commitments, everything is now brought under his lordship. Tremendous thing. But the glory of that throne weeps upon the

acceptance of its governance, its lordship.

From that transaction shall we call it, that crisis, that vision, always afraid of that word, that seeing. And you don't need to have it visually in a physical way. We all know what that means inwardly.

From that vision, and that encounter, and that crisis, everything else took its rise in the life of Paul the Apostle. Everything from that moment was transfigured, transformed, and seen in an entirely new way in the light of Jesus as on the throne. I'm not straining, trying to exaggerate.

I'm only stressing what is so true and so evident. See, after that Paul went for a little while to Damascus, and then he went away to Arabia, spent a long time. And he went there with his Bible, I'm quite sure, all the evidences of it.

And the Bible in one hand, and Jesus on the throne in the other. You want to know your Bible, that's the way, that's the key, that's the door. Jesus on the throne and the Bible.

And he got a transfigured Bible. He got a new Bible. He saw his Bible with which he was very familiar in a new and a living light through, through that great truth, Jesus, Jesus on the throne.

And as he went back over the Bible that he had, right the way back, he saw, yes, yes, that's what's here, inherent everywhere. He saw that the Bible was really the book of one thing, God's intention to have a man and his kind in dominion, reigning in glory. This matter of the glory of a man in heaven interpreted everything, explained everything.

You come to think of it, it does open the Bible. Why these awful conditions? Because that's contrary to what God intended. It declares it, it declares it.

You see, dear friends, if you could realize it, as you look out on the world, the awful conditions in the nations, you need not look far afield. Although it's very terrible out there, we only have to look round about us. The terrible conditions of suffering, of misery, of evil.

Fuck them up. Why? Why? Why does God allow it as the question of the doubter, of the cynic? The answer is here. God allows that which is contrary to him to shout at men that it is contrary.

He never meant it to be like that. When things go wrong, God doesn't just pass it over, smooth it over, and let it go as though it didn't matter. He makes it shout its own crime and its own tragedy.

The world is screaming with its own tragedy, and it's the tragedy of a missed purpose of God. Interpret that to the world, and you've got a way of bringing in the gospel. But we mustn't stay with all that.

See, the Bible sprang into life for Paul. And it's an amazing thing how, from that moment, he took his Bible with him everywhere, and the one thing he was preaching was Jesus is Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord.

The exalted Lord, the exalted Christ, the glorified Christ was his name. And Paul preached from the Bible. From the Bible.

It changed his Bible for him. It was responsible for and accounted for his whole mission and work. What constituted him an apostle? What was it that was the great business to which he was committed? Well, his mission and his work was impassioned and motivated and controlled by this, just this one thing, the absolute glory of the Lord Jesus.

That Jesus should come into his rightful place in this world and in human hearts. That was the one motive, the one object, the one dominating thing in all his work, in all his mission. It was not this and that and a number of things, one central but all-inclusive passion, Jesus, as Lord, to be that in human lives.

His work and his mission were both transfigured and controlled by this that had come into his experience. His sufferings and his endurance were made possible by this vision. Sometimes he makes light of his sufferings.

If ever a man suffered, I think that man suffered. Don't know that there were many ways in which he did not suffer. He suffered greatly, many sufferings and heavy sufferings.

But listen, our light affliction, which is but for a moment, what if for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen, but things that are unseen, and amongst those supremely and over them all, whom having not seen ye loves, in whom now believing, ye'll rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Well, that's mixing Peter up with Paul, but they're all in the same category and mood. But the point, how was it that he was able to endure and suffer triumphantly just because of this basic and central thing, the deep, strong sense, consciousness and conviction that Jesus was on the throne.

I believe that this also was the key to Paul's understanding of the church. As no one else, perhaps, Paul had the greatest comprehension and understanding of the church. From eternity to eternity he goes right back into the councils before the world was and sees it there in the heart and thought of God.

Comes right through and sees it in the great consummation of the ages of the ages. He had a marvelous comprehension of the church, but listen to the things he says. The highest things, the fullest things, the most complete expression of the meaning of the church, the vocation of the church.

As we have before said, he sums it up in this matchless phrase. Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, the church, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages forever and ever. Glory in the church.

What glory? Glory of the glorified Christ. I could stay long, as you know, with the matter of the church and its eternal vocation and election to be the vessel of the glory of Christ. John puts it in his own symbolic way at the end, in terms of the city.

It's simply the glory of Christ in expression at last. That's what the church was chosen for. That is what the church is called unto, to be the vessel, the seat of this authority, this government and this glory.

Christ in glory gave the clue to Paul as to the church and gave an ever-growing explanation of its meaning. The same thing accounted for his concern for the churches. Now no one will question that Paul had tremendous concern for the churches.

He says that he travelled for them. He wept day and night for them. He longed and yearned over them, spent himself for them.

Why? What was the motive? What prompted all that? Ah, it was the glory of his Lord Jesus. Churches existed for the glory of Christ. He said so.

It was all just for that one thing, the glory of Christ. And if there was any deflection, if there was anything that was not right in a church or in the churches, if anything could be done whatsoever to help them, it was all motivated by this one thing, that the Lord Jesus should in all things be glorified. See, he was governed in everything by this thing.

And if we pass to the end of it all and look at Paul's writings about the coming again of the Lord, what is it? What is it that's uppermost with him in the coming of the Lord? Is it the end of his troubles? Is it just for his own joy and pleasure in getting to heaven? Is it anything like that at all? Oh no, it's the reign of his Lord. That his Lord is coming into his own, coming into his kingdom, coming into his rights, coming to the place that he ought to have and be seated that place universally. That's the great thing.

One thing, giving birth and giving rise to everything else. He must reign. He'll reign.

Christ is reigning. Christ is active. On several occasions he is spoken of as on ascension having sat down in heaven.

Having sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. He sat down. If you notice, whenever it is said that he sat down, it is invariably related to the finishing of his redemptive work.

That's done. On the other hand, he stands. No contradiction.

It's only an implication of a different meaning. Stephen saw him, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing. The right hand of God standing.

He's spoken of as standing. When it's a matter of the work of redemption, it's finished. There's nothing more to do.

He can sit down. When it's a matter of the working out of that redemption, here in this world he's on his feet. When there's a challenge to what he has done, he rises up.

Stephen is in the presence of that challenge and the Exalted Lord is on his feet. He's on his feet for his testimony. He's active, that's the point.

He's active. He is not just passively sitting down and waiting. And waiting till his enemies are put under him.

He is putting them under. He is putting them under. He stands to work this thing out.

Now, the activity of the reigning Lord is seen in several ways, only to be mentioned. Firstly, he is taking out of the nations a people for his name. For his name, a people out of the nations.

Great illustration in the Old Testament that, of course, is Israel in Egypt. Taking a people out for his name. It's a tremendous business that.

You can't do that sitting down. What a business it was to get that people out of Egypt for his name. He extended the Prince of this world and exhausted all his power and all his resources and all his endurance.

And got them out. We are left in no doubt about it. That it was the Old Testament, the Old Testament demonstration of the supreme power of God.

There is only one demonstration that exceeds that, and that's New Testament. When he raised him from the dead, the exceeding greatness of the power. Set him at his own right hand.

That's exceeding greatness of power. But it was a tremendous thing to get Israel out of Egypt as a people for his name. And it is no less a thing to get this people out of the nations for his name.

Prince of this world withstands some challenges at every point in every way. No soul is going to be released from that bondage and that kingdom without a fight. It's made far too easy.

People are put into a false position by being made too easy. If we did that, no. We've got to stand into the throne for souls.

To get them out. But he's doing it. In spite of so much.

Some of you here have come from those parts of the world where the prince of this world has a terrible home. A very terrible home. So much at his command.

And you know, you know something of what it means to get just one soul out of that. Suffering and the travail and the anguish and the cost bound up with getting one soul out of a nation for his name. It's a tremendous business.

It wants the throne. A very terrible home. So much at his command.

And you know, you know something of what it means to get just one soul out of that. Suffering and the travail and the anguish and the cost bound up with getting one soul out of a nation for his name. It's a tremendous business.

It wants the throne. The mighty throne. But he is doing it.

Point is, there is so much like Pharaoh and Egypt, but greater than that, against this. And yet he is doing it. We are a little company from a number of nations.

And we are here as a testament of the fact that his power is greater than every other power. He is taking out of the nations, people, for our present liking, too slowly. But he is doing it.

Second thing he is doing is constituting the life of that people on heavenly principles. Which he had freer scope, fuller scope to do it. But he is doing that.

That is, he is inculcating the life and laws of heaven into that people. And again, the illustration is Israel at Sinai and in the wilderness. There the heavenly laws were given.

And they were constituted according to heavenly principles. Tested, tried, proved, according to the laws of heaven. Stayed with that a long time.

Their very daily bread had to come from heaven. They had to live out of heaven. Live on heaven.

Their life had to be indeed a heavenly life. There was nothing here to constitute them God's people. They had to be constituted on a heavenly basis.

And that is what the Lord, the risen Lord is seeking to do and is doing with his people. Only we understood again our experiences. We should see that's the explanation and interpretation.

He is seeking to reconstitute us on a heavenly basis of life. I can only state it. But he is energetically trying to do it.

Because we don't understand what he is doing, we are so slow in the changeover. Let us recognize the fact and take it to heart. And the third thing that he is doing is putting all his enemies under his feet.

And that takes us with Israel over the Jordan into the land. See there how those nations were put under the feet of Joshua through the people. And the counterpart of that now is that it is through his church that the Lord Jesus is bringing his enemies under his feet.

Oh that we were more efficient in this, that it were more true of us that we like the people are putting the enemies under our Joshua's feet. That's a challenge, it's a truth. But he is doing it, putting his enemies under his feet and doing it through his church.

So imperfectly, with such limitations, but that is his way. Old Gernal, the writer of the Christian in Armour, speaking of the serpent's head being put under the Lord's heel, in imagination sees the Lord saying to his church, I have put him under my heel, come you and put your heel upon him. Cooperation with the Lord Jesus in this matter does speak softly, carefully.

There is something he is doing and you can see the temptation that at once arises to see how he has done it through the centuries. It's a tremendous story. The very long term nature of it, the extension of it over time may rob it of some of its force in our consciousness.

If you could bring it all together, just put it all together, the story of how he has done it through the centuries, what a story it would be. Israel bonded itself against him and his Lordship. Where is Israel? Where is Israel? Can Israel lift up its head all through these centuries? It's been bruised, unable to lift itself up, impotent, paralyzed.

It bonded itself against the throne of the exalted Christ. Rome entered into the battle to try this thing. There's Caesar with all his mighty power and resources determined, determined to destroy that name and that power.

Where is Caesar? Where is Rome and all its mighty power? It's gone down into shame and into the dust. Has not been able to lift itself up again. I could go on like that.

In our own lifetime, most of us, we have seen men who have made a bid for world dominion and heaven says that's reserved for one only. And what has happened? Man after man has ended his career in ignominy. Worse than that, who made that bid for the place of God's Son, for the throne, right up to date.

And it will be the same thing with the rest of them. It's reserved to him. He must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet.

He will do it. He will do it. Back to Ezekiel, where we have found so much on this very matter.

Ezekiel, how does he put it? Right in the midst of his prophecies, right at the very center of the book, with this state of things, in Israel, in captivity, the captivity itself, the mighty power of Babylon, all these world powers, enthralling, holding, seeking this place of absolute supremacy, Ezekiel cries, As from God, I will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he shall come, whose right it is, whose right it is. He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. May that transfigure the way for us.

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