

The Consummation of the Ages - the Purpose of God in the Eternal Government of This World

by T. Austin-Sparks

The book of Revelation reveals the consummation of the ages, the fullness and finality of Jesus Christ, and the purpose of God in the eternal government of this world.

Scripture: Colossians 1:16, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Christ's Authority", "God's Eternal Purpose"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the culmination of God's purpose in the eternal governance of the world is revealed in the book of Revelation, which serves as the final summation of all ages, encompassing creation, redemption, and perdition. He highlights that the ultimate issue is the purpose of God as it relates to Christ, the Church, and Israel, and that the book illustrates the comprehensive authority of Christ as the faithful witness and ruler. Sparks points out that the revelation of Christ's victory over death and Hades is central to understanding God's eternal plan, and he encourages believers to recognize the significance of Christ's titles and His role in the final restoration of all things. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the relationship between Christ's humanity and His divine authority, urging the Church to embrace its identity as a kingdom of priests under Christ's lordship.

Transcript

We concluded our last chapter with the words: "The last movement before 'I come quickly' MUST be a Christ-movement." If this book of "the Revelation" is finality, then it is - in that very connection - the book of the fullness and finality of Jesus Christ. Above we have used the word 'consummation', the etymology of which is: 'to bring into one sum, to perfect, to bring together'. This is exactly what this book does. It is the summation of the ages. It comprehends the whole Bible and bounds all history. It compasses creation, redemption, and perdition. It embraces heaven, earth, and hell. It connects with God, man, and Satan. In it there are no less than four hundred allusions to the Old Testament. When all is said, the one question that arises is: 'Is there one thing - one issue that interprets and explains everything?' Yes, there is! The all-inclusive issue is

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In our other series of messages on the Holy City we are seeing that - not only at the end of this book but at the end of all time - universal government is represented by the City, both in fact and nature. It is the symbol of universal authority vested in, and mediated by Christ and His Church. It is the nature of the Son of God as Son of Man. That is why "judgment begins at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17) as in the first chapters, representatively.

This inclusive issue is seen (in this book) to relate to the purpose of God

- (1) in creation;
- (2) in redemption;
- (3) in His Son;
- (4) in Israel;
- (5) in the Church;

and THAT is the way in which to read and study the book! The book is the revelation of final restoration and recovery in Christ Jesus.

A revelation has been given in (a) the Old Testament; (b) the New Testament - brought to its greatest fullness through the Apostles Paul and John.

That revelation has been departed from, both by Israel and the Church. Its greatest fullness was given through Paul to the churches in Asia; hence it is there that the comprehensive message of judgment unto recovery is focused. But that was intended to reach through ALL time to the end, and that message shows that there are always those, a remnant, who stand and make up the difference for the recovery of the fullness of Christ in God's people (Col. 1:24). So, what we have seen in our first three chapters is a fundamental presentation of God's Pattern and God's Way, i.e. His Son and the Cross.

The consummate issue, then, is brought into view in two ways:

- (1) A personal presentation of Christ; and
- (2) A comprehensive designation of Christ in His titles.

As to the latter we have:

- (1) "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness" (1:5)

"Jesus" - the Man. The title of His humanity before His exaltation. When He is so called, almost invariably the connection is with His earthly life before 'being glorified'. After that, as a rule, there is added 'Lord' - 'Lord Jesus', or 'Jesus, our Lord', etc. It is quite a mistake now, as with a whole body of people, to say just 'Jesus, Jesus'. That title, or name, is used only to identify Him with the designation that follows. This One Who is majestically and gloriously unveiled, is none other than the One Who came into this world at Bethlehem and lived a life as a Man here.

"Christ" = Messiah, the Anointed. "This Jesus" was, by anointing, made Prophet, Priest, and King, for all men, in the midst of God's new Israel, the Church. 'Anointed' is His official title to carry out a Divine mandate. It is God committed to Him.

(2) "Faithful and True Witness" (1:5)

"Witness" is the same as "Martyr", "Faithful unto death". His testimony - "the testimony of Jesus" - is forever sealed with His Own Blood. A vast amount of the Bible is gathered into this.

(3) "The Firstborn of the dead" (1:5)

This is position and relationship. Priority to be followed by others in resurrection. There could be no resurrection for any until Jesus was raised, but then 'a new and living hope' sprang to birth for all born-anew believers.

(4) "The Ruler of the kings of the earth" (1:5)

By His resurrection He won universal Lordship. What Satan offered Him on the ground of compromise, and He refused and declined, He has gained through no compromise, but obedience unto death.

This brings us to the all-inclusive issue - the issue which is greater than Caesar AND Satan - His victory.

(5) "The First and the Last" (1:17)

Note the particular use of this title in relation to this book. This is the end! The end is to see everything where, and as, God - at the beginning - intended it to be. 'All things summed up in Christ' (Colossians 1:16-20). Pause here with your New Testament open at 'Ephesians', 'Colossians', 'Hebrews'.

(6) "The Living One" (1:18)

"I became dead" - not 'I was killed'. The Roman Empire, the Jewish nation, the kingdom of Satan, all conspired to kill Him, but "No one taketh it from Me. I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father" (John 10:18).

"I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Here we have two things:

(a) The purpose of His 'becoming dead', His voluntary death. This is in verse 5, and it is summed up in a mighty "US" -

"Loveth US" - "Loosed US" - "Made US".

"Christ loved the Church."

Christ loosed the Church from Satan's authority.

Christ made the Church a "Kingdom and Priests".

"The keys of death and Hades." The right and authority to deliver from the sum of human sin and Satan's power thereby, which is death. Read in here 1 Corinthians 15.

Death, and subsequent captivity - imprisonment - cannot prevail against the Living Lord and His Church. Death is the power, and Hades is the realm in which the system of death operates. Christ has plundered both, and taken their power into His Own hands.

"He plunged in his imperial strength

To gulfs of darkness down;

He brought his trophy up at length;

The foiled usurper's crown."

Again, we have to place the Cross over the whole book!

The Throne is the Throne of the Lamb!

(b) The second thing intimated here is the one which relates to the final issue in a primary way. It is going to be the ground of the real controversy, connected with everything. Because it requires so much consideration, we shall do no more than mention it now. It is just what is THE meaning of our Risen Lord's exultant cry: "I am alive for evermore." Yes, that is it!

The Life of the Ages. Life Triumphant; Life Immortal!

You may be sorry that we break off there for the present, but this is enough to bring us face to face with the mighty issue of this book - even that of God's eternal counsels.

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