

The Crisis of Our Time

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the current spiritual crisis and the necessity of personal experience with Christ for true knowledge and discernment.

Duration: 1:11:01

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 12:32, Hebrews 1:1-2

Topics: "Person Of Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that all four gospels in the Bible lead up to the cross, highlighting the significance of the crucifixion in the message of Jesus. The speaker warns against the danger of becoming complacent in one's knowledge of the teachings of God, as some people who have had extensive teaching have ultimately rejected it. The sermon focuses on the person of Jesus as the central figure in the crisis of the cross, bringing about a change in the dispensation. The speaker also references two Bible verses, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, highlighting the importance of understanding the times and recognizing that God has spoken to us through his son.

Transcript

We remember, O Lord, that it is written, He spake, and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast. By the word of the Lord were the heavens, the earth created. Our prayer, Lord, is that Thou would speak Acts, that Thy word may be Thine act.

Not just words, Lord, but words of power, divine fear. By the word, something done. Make it like that.

Even now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the matter that the Lord has laid on my heart for these morning processions is that of what has come to us and what we have come to by the coming of the Lord Jesus. For this present hour, I just want to lay down two fragments of Scripture around which we shall move present. The first is in the Old Testament in the first book of the Chronicles.

First book of the Chronicles, chapter 12. Verse 32 And of the children of Issachar men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. The other is in the New Testament, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 1 And verse 1 and 2 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.

Knowledge of the times at the end of these times hath spoken in his Son. Or, as you see, in Son. Son-wise.

And these Scriptures and their context you will notice are in a time of crisis and change. Very big crises very significant change. In the letter to the Hebrews the reference to the end of certain times and the introduction of other times represents a tremendous crisis what Dr. Campbell Morgan called the crisis of the Christ.

Sorry he stole that wonderful way of putting it. I'd like to have been the originator of it. That is what it is that is before us the crisis of the Christ which is, of course, the crisis of the dispensations.

And then the Hebrew letter brings us to the crisis of our own time. Not only the great general movement from one regime to another but the specific application of that movement to our own time. And as in the setting of the passage in Chronicles so in this letter to the Hebrews the important thing is not just to know of a change of times of regime, of divine economy but to have understanding of what it is.

What the change is. We shall see, I think it is of immense consequence not only to know that there are different dispensations different economies in the divine sovereignty but for the Lord's people to know the nature of the times in which they live. I venture to suggest to you that perhaps the most important thing just now is for the people of God to know the nature of the time in which they live.

So far as God is concerned menace amount of confusion complications are immense and far-reaching just now in Christianity. Many, many people don't know just where they are. What is right? What is not right? What is the truth? What is not the truth? So on and on and I repeat the important thing supremely important thing is to have knowledge understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do now what we ought to do now what Christians ought to do now because of the peculiar and particular nature of what God is doing now I think you will agree with me that is very vital.

Now in the scriptures throughout the Bible of course we do have many crises many movements through a crisis from one state, position, order to another I'm not going to even mention them but you know that so it is, the Bible is marked throughout by reaching a point from which everything takes a new complexion represents a new phase of the movement, the going of God the Bible is just full of that sort of thing God moving, moving by stages and every stage marked by some crisis when we use the word crisis we mean we are brought face to face with something of tremendous significance which is going to govern the whole future and make all the difference in the future now from the divine side these crises are onward movements they are God moving on from the human side they are God moving back

because things have deviated on the human side things have gone off the direct line of God and other things have come in which God never fully intended if he intended them at all they were not in his original pattern there has been deviation so the crisis arises which has this twofold meaning God is going on but in order to go on he must bring back he must take his people back to the point from which they departed that is exactly where we are God is going on he is not giving up he is not defeated he is not having to revise his program he is going on but from the standpoint or side of his people he is having to pull them back here you have gone off the line you have moved away from my intention you have deviated you must come back to the point and pick things up again with me I am going on

if you want to go on you must come back and rejoin me at the point where you deviated I think that is perfectly clear the two aspects of any crisis are always those and the crisis is therefore one perhaps and

very often of leaving an entire regime what I have called economy order development leaving it in its entirety leaving it behind and moving with God in a new entirety on new ground to what is holy and originally exactly according to his mind these are things involved in these crises this is the method of God I believe that the Lord wants to show us this week something of the present crisis in Christianity and if that is too big a word it seems too objective the present crisis in your life and in mine in relation to his original thought and his full thought now we have to put in there

this man never really learns anything theoretical you are not going to learn anything by volumes poured out upon you in words from this desk this week that sounds pretty hopeless doesn't it then why come here why you men talk to us no you are not really going to learn anything by all this I say really learn man never really learns anything only by experience take that in underscore it God knows that and that is why God is so practical that is why God would take years and years centuries three or four thousand years governed by this thing that men don't learn by what they are told they only learn by experience that is they have got to have a history with God under the hand of God before they will learn anything you think you know something how do you know it how have you come to know it by

attending conferences no no there can be a terrible tragedy along that line I know definitely of people who have had the fullest teaching for many years twenty, thirty, forty years who could hardly have more than they have had and at the end have jettisoned the whole thing wash their hands of it they know it all they say we know it all we know all that you can't tell us any more than we know alright alright so you may come here year after year and think you know well how do you know God knows that we really know nothing only by history by experience this sounds very elementary and simple I know but we have got to get down to this you see we are coming to this point of spiritual understanding of the times our time and knowing what Israel ought to do now I ought to put an hour in just there

in brackets in parenthesis on two Greek words in the New Testament I took the trouble to go through the New Testament with these two Greek words and I myself got a surprise after a good many years of studying the New Testament find that I got sheets of paper full of references and they were the whole thing divided into two columns on two words both of which are translated into the English word know and they are two entirely different words in two entirely different realms one whole column is the word which means knowing information information you know it because you have been told you have heard it you have read it and so you know that way another Greek word entirely which is the word which means you have a personal experience of that thing and you know it because it has done something

in you and become a part of you it is your history it is your experience it is your life it is you the New Testament can be divided by those two Greek words and I am not quoting Greek I am just telling you what is there there they are know this is life eternal that they may know the not by information but the word is here experience have an experience of this this is life see something very different well I must not go on with that I just indicated and pointed out and here we are with Issachar who had knowledge of what Israel ought to do and our New Testament is built around these two words different kinds of knowledge different kinds of knowledge we leave that as we go on now we have said that the Bible is marked by time marks and that we are brought with our New Testament to a new time

mark or crisis and everything for you for me for all the Lord's people is going really to depend upon whether we have this spiritual discernment understanding this spiritual knowledge this spiritual knowledge this kind of knowledge of the second category which I referred of what God is really doing now what he is working at now not in general but in particular so if only this week could bring us all to that discernment

this is going to be more than a Bible conference words and teaching going to have tremendous issues and let me say at once I hope you are here for a crisis I hope that you are here prepared to be turned upside down and inside out prepared to leave a whole regime if God says that's finished with and to really embrace his present economy and commit yourself to it I hope that

is the position which you are you'll be found out on that as we go on it's an important matter of recognizing and understanding and especially and inclusively of what happened really happened when the son of God Jesus Christ entered history came into this world oh perhaps you think you could give an answer to that what happened I know some things you would say but I am convinced dear friends it doesn't very much matter what I'm convinced of but for what it's worth I put it that way that very very few Christians today really understand what happened when Jesus Christ came into this world that is what we are going to spend hours upon trusting the Lord to give us the opening of our understanding you see the coming of Jesus Christ into this world into history split history down the middle it

split history down the middle on the one side it said finish on the other side beginning great great immense divide was represented by the entering into history of Jesus you've got to understand that divide there have been of course three cycles in relation to him first has been the historical I don't know how it has been with you perhaps you've come in at a later point but I remember when I first came to the Lord and became interested in the things of Christ it was the time when everything was being made of the historical Jesus the books that were being most read were those classics of the life of Jesus or the life of Christ some of you know Dean Farrow's life of Christ all those things the Jesus of Palestine the Jesus of Bethlehem of Nazareth of Capernaum the Jesus of Jerusalem Jesus of

the mound outside Jerusalem called Calvary Jesus of Gethsemane the Jesus of the three and a half years or the thirty years Jesus of history everybody was interested in that they watched him walk and go and speak and act here and there and everywhere and it's all written up as the life of Jesus well that's what engaged us nothing wrong of course with it quite good I expect some of you are still reading lives of Christ on that level that was a phase and may be a phrase still a phase still but then there came a change and we passed into what we might call the theological or doctrinal Christ after that all this arose about the person of Christ the virgin birth the deity Godhead and all what is called the fundamentals of the faith of Jesus Christ the theological and doctrinal and my word what

a phase it has been what a tremendous battle ground the person of Jesus has been two phases I wonder whether this second phase is passing of course not with some with many it's everything nothing wrong with that of course I'm not here saying it's wrong to be occupied with the person the deity the eternal sonship the virgin birth and so on of Jesus nothing wrong with that that's all right you have to have that but get over it get over it sooner or later you'll have to get over it it just won't do the thing I was on the verge of saying it won't do the trick it just won't get you through your theology is not going to get you through you move into a realm of such terrific spiritual conflict that your very faith will be struck at at its roots you may be shaken after all that you know in that

way and not stand people are not going to really get through the final crisis on theology on Christian doctrine though it may be fundamental not going to get through it now there's your two phases they may run concurrently or they may be more or less defined as periods but there's another one a third one which is the ultimate which is the supreme it's about that we're going to speak I'm not going to mention it now we should spend hours on that shall I just to save you it's the spiritual phase see you can have the historical and you can have the theological without the spiritual and though you may have all that and not have the

spiritual you're not going to survive you haven't touched the real heart and core of the great divide the great change that has taken place with the coming of Jesus

Christ it's the spiritual life of Christ that matters not the historical it's the spiritual understanding of Christ and not the theological but if you don't understand that hold on for a day or two and we'll be getting nearer as we go along well these three phases are clearly recognized are they not and we have come now to the last the spiritual the revelation of Jesus Christ inwardly by the Holy Spirit supreme absolutely essential indispensable as I said God when he moves and he is moving now on this line if you can discern on this line he of course is moving onward but he is moving backward and if you get hold of that last thing that I have just said you will see how true it is how God is moving back in order to move on what is the New Testament based upon the historical life of Jesus

no the theological life of Jesus no it's all there but that's not his foundation the real root of Christianity this new dispensational crisis and movement real root is gathered into words of the Apostle Paul who so very much represents in himself his own experience history with God the nature of his whole dispensation and simple but profound words it's all gathered up it pleased God it pleased God to reveal his Son in me something more than the Damascus Road objective experience that was just the turning point in the great crisis that was the impact upon him of a meaning which was to begin then and unfold through all the rest of his life it pleased God to reveal his Son in me that's it not to me in me what he later wrote quoted here last night God and our Lord Jesus Christ Father of Glory

would give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge our word our second category word but with a prefix in the full knowledge of him a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him of Christ that's inward that's inward right deep down at the very source and center of our being God has made us to see and to see the significance of his Son Jesus Christ out of that Christianity comes true Christianity and anything less than that is dangerous Christianity dangerous for the individual concerned dangerous for the church this is what I mean by the spiritual crisis the spiritual aspect above and beyond and more than the historical and the theological or the doctrinal revelation of Jesus Christ within that's it the Lord alone can do that Paul had to pray to the

Father of Glory to do it but it can be done and it can be done here it can be done so that we go away saying I have seen I have seen I can never be the same a whole regime is left behind an entirely new order has come in for me I'm out of something and I'm in something else I have seen Jesus Christ the focal point dear friends the message that I have to bring to you now the Bible let's get back again onto large alliance I must keep this enemy in view much as I dislike him the Bible is divided and this is child's talk into two main divisions what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament but note it is more than a division of books Genesis to Malachi comprising so many books one half then from Matthew to Revelation so many books thus the Bible is divided into two oh but it's much

more than a division of books it is this great divide this great spiritual divide the four gospels what do they really mean when you've stood back ask the question what do they represent well there are two things I'm going to say about it first of all they introduce the person who himself is the crisis the person who is himself the crisis and brings in and precipitates the crisis and changes the dispensation in its entirety they've introduced the person who does that and who is that the crisis of the crisis but you notice of course commonplace that all the four gospels while differing in details of content some containing what others don't and so on having their own differences all four gospels head straight direct up to the cross every one of them has this characteristic in common

whatever other differences there may be they all have this in common that they end with the cross the person of the crisis is introduced and the crisis itself is the crisis of the cross the cross is the crisis of the change that has come in with the person be patient as we move on and this is what it amounts to here is the person here is his earthly life walk work and teaching but none of that can become of any value to anybody until the cross has been planted over it all you can have all that is about the historic Jesus and the theological Christ and nothing matters nothing will happen until all that is in those gospels is brought right up to the cross and the cross makes effective the crisis of the person you see that the whole of that so that the result and the issue is this that

really between the two divisions of the bible between the old testament and the new testament right there is the cross right there is the cross you've got to put the cross between Malachi and Matthew so far as books are concerned put it right there because on the one side of the cross all that goes before and leads up to Malachi so far as books are concerned I'm not speaking about the chronological order so far as the arrangement is concerned all that has been in that from Genesis to Malachi on that side of the cross the cross says no more no more no finished that's done with the other side of the cross what yes all things new I haven't got a bit of or I should draw a big cross and I would draw a thick line right down the center top to bottom not only on the cross from above the cross

right from heaven down through the cross to the depths wide line and no man's land and then on that side of the cross I would write one word not not one big comprehensive word N-O-T as big as the cross on the other side of the cross the onward side not the backward side the onward side I'd put one other word B-U-T but not but now dear friends I've said something that can take up all your time for the rest of your life do you know those two words are two governing words throughout the whole of your New Testament if you like now to make a very closely analytical study of your New Testament in the light of this and underline every occurrence of those two words you'll have an immense new comprehension revelation of the meaning of Christ and of the difference that he has made of the great

divide and of what we're in not but I dare not launch out onto it it applies to everything how much dare I say without being involved in this fellow it applies to, it is made to apply to the very beginning of Christian history and the individual open your gospel by John where are you at once which were born not of the flesh not of blood not of the will of man, here's your big not at the very beginning but of God now if I went on to show you how it applies to everything in the New Testament we're going to come to it later on in some particular particulars but here we are that cross with its great divide and centre looking backward over all that has been right up to that point and saying not not not any longer no more finished closed door no way through heaven and God's great not in the

resurrection resurrection is the positive isn't it always that now neither is only another word isn't it for not neither is circumcision anything or uncircumcision but not but a new creation so if you go on it's just wonderful how those two words open up everything and give us an insight into what has come to us and what we have come into with the coming of Jesus Christ this great division with the cross there between the testaments the end of Malachi which is a tragic book of the failure of everything in the past the beginning Matthew hope light, life, everything fresh new the great but of a new order of things hmm the end of a system and the beginning of an entirely new one the cross of the Lord Jesus has written these two words large over the whole history covered by the bible covered

by the bible the bible is intended to comprehend human history and human history comprehended in these two words not there is something here that I must say that I think may be helpful hope it will be you see the

cross the cross is a very practical thing with God it is not the doctrine or just the doctrine of the way of salvation way of redemption it's that it's not the theology of the atonement and all such doctrine and it is certainly not just the historic thing represented by the crucifix the cross is an immensely practical thing with God intended to make actual this divide and although you may know all about the message of the cross or think you do you may be just full of the teaching of the cross the test really of the knowledge that you have about the cross is whether this divide

has been made in you made in you that the cross has resulted in the leaving behind of one entire regime and system and order oh I know you say of course it's meant that I have left the world and things of the world oh you that's almost nonsense to talk like that you don't know what you've got to leave behind but you will learn under the hand of God what the cross means about the elimination the moving away further and further away coming to that in Hebrew I'm baffling all the time not to overtake too much but you come we're going into this letter to the Hebrews you come to a phrase which of course of course you know let us therefore go to him without the camp bearing his reproach what does that mean to you without the camp it takes a lifetime to learn what that means and it means going

through some literally terrific devastating experiences of our soul life this is the work of the cross it's a going out on the one side a going out of what? an immensity that it's to him oh it's to him that's another immensity isn't it you see what I mean the cross is a tremendously practical thing forcing this gap this divide wider and wider as we go on so that the fact is like it or not like it the fact is that as we move more and more in spiritual understanding and apprehension of the meaning of Christ we find ourselves more and more alone so far as many Christians are concerned and certainly so far as the traditional system of Christianity is concerned well now to bring this which is only preparatory, introductory to a close let me say again coming back to the starting point progress

progress in the life and purpose of God with which this letter to the Hebrews has to do in its entirety you know that don't you let us what? let us? that's one of the key words, key phrases to the whole letter let us I know you've gone too far brother you said let us go on you've gone too far wherefore let us leave that's the first letter let us, wherefore let us leave let us beware let us go on what I'm saying is that progress in the life and purpose of God for the individual and for the church depends if you forget everything else write this inside depends upon spiritual discernment spiritual discernment this kind of spiritual knowledge and understanding as to the nature of this great change that has come in with the Lord Jesus discernment of it, now if you go back and we will for a

moment go back to our Old Testament passage 1 Chronicles 12 note the chapter don't you have you scanned the chapter it's a new movement isn't it, it's a crisis a turning point David is out there outside the camp he's outside the camp he's in the wilderness, he's in his cave and now there are coming to him men of all the tribes or of many of the tribes, just nuclei, just a few kind of remnant of Israel coming to him outside the camp and they are described as their various characteristics men of valour of courage men of strength great strength men of ability to make war men who are committed with all their might for it says they came with a perfect heart very good and so all these coming ones who are falling away to David are characterized by these things and then right there this this

change of complexion it looks like a new a different category men of Issachar who had knowledge of the times, understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do right at the heart of this return movement this new movement of God which is a recovery movement right at the heart of it there is put this contrasting almost striking thing men who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to

do and I venture to suggest that with all the driving force of these other men all their their muscles their physical force all that side of things but for these men of Issachar there have been something lacking which might have spoiled the whole movement.

I believe it's put there to show that with all with all that is being done and rightly well meaningly the thing that must be here right at the heart of everything is spiritual understanding spiritual discernment spiritual knowledge, knowing what the significance of this time is knowledge of the times what this means, oh this is not just something happening that men are doing no, this has a meaning, a deep a profound divine meaning and these people have seen it they have understanding as to the meaning of this present time and because they have understanding they know what Israel ought to do don't you feel that's important very vital well you say what did the men of Issachar really see what was it that they understood what was it that they knew Israel ought to do pause and think look at

the context again of course it's historic in illustration but spiritual in principle and the answer to that in this dispensation is the letter to the Hebrews where do you begin your letter to the Hebrews God having in times past old times proceeded in this way adopted this method let's finish with those times at the end of such times of methods spoken in his son whom he appointed heir of all things to come to David God's chosen sovereignly chosen God's elect God's appointed God's intended ruler God's principle of heavenly authority amongst the Lord's people all that David means they knew that Israel ought to turn back to David and put David in the place for which he has been anointed of God that's simple isn't it in language don't forget it represented something you've still got Saul

alive you know you've still got the old regime of Saul, he's not dead yet he has his forty years run and my word, what a problem God's man anointed man is not in his place fully on the way there but this is God's way turn over your letter to the Hebrews and there you are what is the movement, the final movement the full movement which embraces all the parts the fragments comprehends all and makes everything final, fullness and finality are the word to write over the letter to the Hebrews a Christ movement with spiritual understanding of what he is, who he is what he represents in the universe of God, spiritual apprehension of Christ oh the words sound so feeble don't they so feeble, perhaps familiarity robs them of their strength but dear friends everything for Christianity everything for

Christianity for destiny depends now upon an adequate apprehension of the meaning of Jesus Christ in God's order of things and this is going to be devastating, devastating to a whole system and a Christian system so called, do you believe it will be that it is going for us to disintegrate how Christianity may disintegrate perhaps you don't understand what I mean yes, it's going to be a big no of God written over a whole Christian system and men although they are not intelligent as to this they do sense strongly and growingly sense that they've got to do something to keep Christianity intact I believe that the whole ecumenical movement is a tremendous effort to save Christianity from collapsing the whole world council of churches is to put Christianity on crutches and save it's reputation

and men are doing this tremendous effort because there are those who say Christianity has it's day it's had it's day no longer means anything and you say well that's infidelity that's apostasy but dear dear friends, don't you make any mistake, if you're going on with God, you're going to come into spiritual experiences in your life with God, where you will be tested on every point of your Christian life as to whether this is valid, as to whether this will stand up to the situation whether this is going to get me through yes on the things that you believe most strongly and think you know most fully you're going to be tested don't make any mistake about it time may come when in your life you'll be tempted to question the

very deepest realities of your past conviction there are men and women

in this world who are going through that now quite easy I think of some of those long years in prison and I read what they wrote before and I have to say I wonder if they believe that now I wonder if they hold to that now, I wonder if that is getting them through now I wonder that's a tremendous statement that they made about the all sufficiency of Christ and so on and so on I wonder I believe they'll come through because He is Lord the heart is right with Him but Mark you I'm simply saying I'm simply saying that this great question of the real spiritual significance of our faith of our Christianity is going to be put sorely to the test yes it's going to be found out then whether it's Christian tradition Christian doctrine Christian theology the Christian system generally commonly

accepted or whether what it's Christ it's Christ we're going to be stripped down to Christ stripped down to Christ the place where we say all I have left after all my learning and teaching and Christian work, all I have left is the Lord Himself but is that going to be a fatal position not at all you know the old woman on the ship don't you in the tremendous storm and she looked at the captain and said captain are we going to be some Christian captain said you'd better pray oh has it come to that laughter yes we'll be ripped on Christ and then we'll be found out where we are under the knot or under the button we pray now Lord for thee it is to interpret explain and apply give the understanding our reaction to it all is this flesh cannot this flesh cannot we in ourselves cannot, we know it

but thou art sufficient our hearts are open unto thee Lord our hearts we trust are truly toward thee make use of this feeble ministry to give us interpretation of future experiences thy dealings with us thy strange ways oh Lord open our eyes give us spiritual understanding we ask in the name of thy son amen

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