

The Cross and the Lord's Coming Again

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Lord's coming is rooted in the Cross and is the definite outworking as well as the outcome of it, requiring spiritual progress, growth of faith, and patient endurance.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Topics: "The Cross", "The Second Coming"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound connection between the Cross of Christ and His Second Coming, arguing that both events are intertwined and should not be viewed in isolation. He critiques the tendency to treat the doctrine of the Lord's return as a separate, isolated event, highlighting the importance of spiritual readiness and growth in faith as essential for the Church's preparation for His coming. Sparks warns against the distractions of speculative theories and emphasizes that true understanding comes from a spiritual state of separation and expectation. He illustrates this with the journey of Rebekah, who, like the Church, must undergo a process of faith and transformation before meeting her bridegroom. Ultimately, the Cross is not only the initiation of salvation but also a vital part of the Church's readiness for Christ's return.

Transcript

This is no more a treatise on the Second Advent of Christ than a former chapter was on the Holy Spirit. Our specific object is to point out the connection between the Cross and the Coming. This will be seen to be the fourth and final intersection on our diagram.

Just as Salvation, Sanctification, the Holy Spirit, have been made something in themselves, and have become isolated doctrines, separated from their relatedness to all else, and have therefore become abnormal and unbalanced, so has it become with the teaching concerning the Lord's coming again. For a long time this matter fell into abeyance and was neglected or rejected. Then came a real awakening concerning it, and it was given its place again. But, like every swing of the pendulum, it has either taken on abnormalities, or become something in itself. In the one case it does positive harm: in the other it does not do much harm or good at all.

Some of us have lived long enough to outlive many Second Advent theories - not of cranks, extremists, or fanatics (although there have been some of these) but of honest, devout, and otherwise balanced and sound evangelical leaders. How sure some were that the German Kaiser was the Antichrist! How much was published and said by prophetic students that Allenby's entrance into Jerusalem was the end of the

times of the Gentiles! Then Hitler took his place in the long line of Antichrists. A well-known evangelical leader travelled to Rome with the express purpose of telling Mussolini that he was the one raised up of God at the end-times to reconstruct the Roman Empire according to prophecy, and Mussolini took it on. Well, what about it all?

We are not dismissing "signs of the times," for there undoubtedly are such, but we do emphasize that the spiritual aspect of things is far safer and more important than the temporal, fascinating as the latter may be. SATAN CAN SIDETRACK AS MUCH BY MEANS OF UNRELATED TRUTH AS BY POSITIVE ERROR.

Before his departure to be with the Lord, a beloved friend and servant of God who had made prophecy his life-long study, and who was well-known as an investigator, wrote to me and said that he had been compelled to change his entire standpoint and much of his interpretation in this whole matter. This is sad, if not tragic! We do need to be on very safe and sure ground.

The Lord's Coming Is Rooted In The Cross

and is the definite outworking as well as the outcome of it.

'Thou art coming; at Thy table

We are witnesses for this.'

The Table, which shows forth His death, links that death with His coming again - "till He come."

To show that the Cross is the basis of the Blessed Hope would be unnecessary here, but to show how that is so may be important. The reason for this is that so many have not got beyond the idea - an idea never seriously thought out - that the Second Advent is just an isolated event, or an event which, standing in a program or time-table of dispensational movements, will just happen. When the clock strikes twelve the Lord will come. Well, "within His own authority" the Father may have the times and the seasons, but in touching this matter we are confronted with one of those inscrutable ways of God. There are several of them in the Bible. To reconcile freewill and predestination lies with the wisdom of God alone, we cannot do it. In the same way it is beyond our understanding that a certain state which lies with the volition of Christians should synchronize with a fixed point of time for the Lord's coming. Yet it is beyond dispute that in both the above matters the Bible is quite clear and emphatic. The Lord will come at a time definitely known to and fixed by Him, but, on the other hand, the Lord's coming will be just as much a spiritual matter as a chronological one.

It is on this spiritual side of Adventism that the Church and its teachers are so weak. As truly as Abraham's servant, sent to fetch the bride for Isaac, foreshadowed the Holy Spirit's being sent to fetch a bride for Christ, so truly is it a matter of spiritual progress on her part toward Him and the Spirit's showing of His things. Rebekah did not make one sudden leap from Mesopotamia to Canaan. It was a long, exacting and testing journey, and one involving a great exercise of faith. There was the whole question of leaving everything and everyone whose roots were in that land. There was the matter of implicit trust in the servant. There was, no doubt, a temptation more than once to wonder if the end was sure. And there was the constant battle with the reactions arising out of the weariness and the length of the unfamiliar way. But all this had a necessary effect upon this elect bride to both fit her for her great vocation and make the ecstasy of realization all the greater. This is at best a poor figure of the spiritual side of the consummation

of union with Christ at His appearing.

The fact is that we are to move just as much toward Him as He to us. The break with all here in a heart way, the leaving of this world spiritually, the occupation with the things of Christ, the patient endurance, and the growth of faith, are indispensable and inseparable factors in relation to His coming and our going on with Him.

Let there be differences of opinion as to the willy-nilly translation of Christians, or as to whether the whole Church will be caught up at Christ's coming; it is not necessary to formulate theories or teachings on such matters. Selectiveness of rapture may or may not be held, but from one thing no one can get away, God has left no room for theories here; a spiritual state of separation, occupation, and expectation is invariably bound up with our being received by Him at His appearing.

In our diagram there are two blue lines, and blue stands for heavenliness. Israel in the wilderness was given a blue token to wear on the border of their garments. This betokened that they were - in God's mind - a heavenly people. They no more belonged to the wilderness than they did to Egypt. It was a place in which to know and prove their heavenliness - heavenly life, resource, guidance, etc. - and it was always pointing to "a heavenly country" which was really their own. But Jordan was the way in, the real point of crossing. And Jordan forever represents the Cross of Christ. As the Red Sea represented what God did for them, so Jordan was the figure of a work consummated in them.

"Ephesians" is the counterpart of "Joshua"; it is "in the heavenlies in Christ," but the Holy Spirit took what was chronologically first - "Thessalonians" - and caused it to be placed after "Ephesians," as much as to say - The Coming of the Lord (the main theme of "Thessalonians") is the outcome of the Church's arrival at its heavenly position.

More will be said on this when we deal with the Church in our next chapter, but here we want to underline the Divine revelation that the Cross separates us from this world, from this "flesh," from Satan's authority, and joins us to Christ, brings us on to heavenly ground, and constitutes us a spiritual people, and it is for such that the Lord will come. When David was driven out of his place by the usurper Absalom and his company, he exercised sublime wisdom and faith by sending back Abiathar with the ark into the city. It was his own foothold there. It was that which would always give him a place, even where he was otherwise repudiated. And to it he would return. It was his hold and his magnet. The Lord will not just return as a matter of course. He will come to and for something. It is a love matter. He will come for His bride, but it has to be mutual. "Them that have loved His appearing." So the Cross is as much a part of the consummation as it is of the initiation, and by its operation in the life as a principle and power the Lord will come for "a people prepared." This preparation relates to heart condition and not to mental apprehension of prophetic truth.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-cross-and-the-lords-coming-again/>

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