

# The Cross and the Nations

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The Church is the embodiment of the Cross, and its corporate expression is essential for holding the earth for its rightful Lord and establishing Christ's right to the nations.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Corporate Witness"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the role of the Cross in the nations, asserting that the Church embodies the Cross as it reaches out to the world. He explains that the Apostles preached Christ crucified in pairs, highlighting the importance of corporate testimony in evangelism. The Church is seen as the vessel of witness, tasked with holding the earth for its rightful Lord, Jesus Christ. Sparks notes that while the nations may not be fully saved now, they still declare Christ's authority through the Church's presence. Ultimately, he warns that Satan seeks to divide the Church, and only through the deep work of the Cross can believers effectively counter his schemes.

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## Transcript

Having seen that the first sphere in which the Cross has its expression in its various relationships is the Church, we now come to its place in the nations of the world. It must be recognized at the outset that, in the intention of God, the Cross does not pass THROUGH the Church to the nations, but takes the Church with it there. It is not the Cross in the nations as something preached apart from the Church, but the Church in the nations as the embodiment of the Cross. This cannot be represented in one diagram, therefore it has to be stated.

It is true that the Apostles preached among the nations Christ crucified and risen, but as a rule and a principle they did not do this single handed. The Lord's principle of a minimum of two was adhered to as closely and continuously as possible, and on the few occasions when an Apostle was isolated and alone there was usually hold up and threat either to ministry or life. This corporate principle of going forth as on "Body" ground, with the Church behind, and the Church implied in more than one being together, indicated that the Lord's required means is that which represents Christ corporate. Two is regarded in the Bible as the number which implies adequate testimony. This is easily verifiable by a glance at the way in which two were joined by God so frequently, and that "in the mouth of two witnesses" everything shall be established. Now, then, the Lord had said "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world FOR A TESTIMONY... and then... the end...." The Church is the vessel of witness or testimony, hence the

minimum is two. The principle is to have a corporate expression or representation of Christ in every nation. The deepest meaning of "evangelize" is to bring to, not only to proclaim. It is inherent in the Word, and it means - to bring Christ to the nations. "This good news of the realm and reign (of God through Christ) must be set in the nations for a testimony"; that would be the meaning of the statement. It is in keeping with all the fundamental principles of Divine revelation.

(1) "The Earth Is The Lord's"

But the earth has become overrun and possessed by that which is inimical to God. He has been driven out, and a usurper has occupied the throne here. That is both stated and illustrated many times in Scripture.

After the flood, when the earth appeared as a purged and renewed thing, Noah and the nucleus of that new creation built an altar and consecrated the earth to God in that way; in effect saying, "The earth is the Lord's." The testimony was locally represented; a universal right locally established in a corporate company by what symbolized the Cross. When David was driven from his rightful place by the usurper Absalom, he sent Zadok back with the ark. Zadok and Abiathar were there with the testimony to the fact that David's rightful place was THERE, where the testimony was. The Church, with the testimony of Jesus, is to be representatively holding the earth for its rightful Lord.

(2) "All Things Have Been Created... Unto Him"

The nations are Christ's inheritance. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The Church is the company in which Christ is establishing His right by taking an earnest of the inheritance. The nations may not be saved in this dispensation, but they will yield a token, and in that "people out of the nations for His name" (Acts 15:14) they declare that all is His by right. It is something, even if there are no mass movements, just to hold the ground for Christ. This will indicate the place of the Cross, for it was by the Cross that He cast out the prince of this world. It was by the Cross that He established His moral right to it. It was because of the Cross that He was given "all authority in heaven and on earth," and received "the name which is above every name." Only in the virtue of Calvary's triumph shall we be able to hold our ground in this sin - and devil - ridden world.

Then, if this is true and the corporate principle is the effectual one, the one object of Satan, in order to frustrate the end and spoil the testimony, will be to break up the corporate life. Satan will never stop until he has done all that he can to divide the last two who are spiritually related in the testimony of Jesus. This will necessitate a deep work of the Cross in those concerned, so that "the prince of this world will have nothing in them." Humility, meekness, self-emptying, and deep devotion to the Lord's honor are fruits of the Cross. We cannot meet and counter Satan with doctrine, technique, phraseology and slogans about Satan being a defeated foe. He must meet crucified men and women who have given Christ a lot of room. You will see the corporate action of the Church in the Book of the Acts. A 'Church' in the nations which is not crucified to the world is a help to Satan, but a crucified company is a great menace to his kingdom.

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