

# The Heavenly Calling - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The heavenly calling is God's invitation to become part of his new heavenly Israel, where we are companions of Christ and heirs of God, following spiritual lines instead of temporal lines.*

**Duration:** 54:15

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 8:7, John 10:14, John 10:27-28, Hebrews 3:5, Hebrews 12:18-20, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 2:5

**Topics:** "Heavenly Calling"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the true purpose of God's Church through Christ Jesus. He highlights that in this dispensation, believers have come into all that was foreshadowed in Israel of old. The speaker explains that God's great purpose in His Church is often misunderstood by many Christians, leading to a deplorable state of Christianity. He urges believers to seek true instruction and knowledge of what God has called them unto, emphasizing the need to go beyond head knowledge and allow these truths to penetrate their hearts.

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## Transcript

We are occupied at this time with that great thing that God is doing in this dispensation. He is constituting a new heavenly Israel and preparing it for the day when its king comes and it will reign with him forever. The members of this spiritual Israel are called the companions of a heavenly calling, the companions of Christ.

The point at which we have arrived just now is that in the constituting of the spiritual Israel God is following the same line as he took with the earthly Israel. But with the one great difference that with the earthly he followed temporal lines, with the heavenly he is following spiritual lines, but they are both one in principle. We have seen something of this, but we are going to see a little more of it today.

I think it must be perfectly true that this is what God is doing. The letter to the Hebrews is the great document of the transition from one Israel to another. And there are many evidences in that letter of this truth.

If anybody has any doubt at all, there is one fragment which I think should settle all such questions. You look at chapter 12 of the letter to the Hebrews and read the section from verse 18. For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that

no word more should be spoken unto them.

For they could not endure that which was enjoined, if even a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned. And so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. Well that is the old Israel being constituted at the mount.

The word is, to us you are not come to that. That is not God's way of constituting his new Israel. But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made covenants, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

I think that settles all arguments. If we only had that paragraph in the New Testament, we know what the difference is between the old dispensation and the new. We know the difference between Judaism and Christianity.

We know the difference from what they were in and what we are in. But that is not all. That is only a part of the whole argument.

I will have you note some of the titles that are in this letter, which are evidences of this truth. To begin with, we have God's family. We all know that Israel was looked upon by God as his family.

To Pharaoh, God said, let my son go. And the evidence is too much for us to even follow through. Israel of old was, in a certain sense, looked upon by God as his family.

They were his children. And in a certain sense, he spoke of himself as their father. Here in this letter of transition from the old Israel to the new, that idea is carried over into the spiritual realm.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 10. For it became him for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both he that sanctifyeth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise. And again, I will put my trust in him.

And again, behold, I and the children which God hath given me. You will notice that that is a whole list of quotations from the Old Testament. Formerly, it related to the old Israel.

Now that Israel has been set aside. But God is taking up in a new way this principle of family life in relation to himself. His son is the firstborn among many brethren.

And we are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Probably you have noticed that the very first idea of God was of family. The idea of family was born in the heart of God.

This is not some official society. This is not some institution. The deepest thing in God's heart about us is to have us as his children.

And you who know the Bible will be able to quote to yourself many passages. Such as, like as a father pitied his children, so the Lord pitied them that fear him. We could build up a tremendous mountain of

references to God as father and his people as his children.

God could have made an organization of people into a kind of society. He could have called some from this place and some from there. And then he could have given them the title of some denomination.

And said, now you are members of this denomination. You are formed into this organization. But God never had any such idea.

His idea is of family. And the Lord Jesus said that he came into this world especially to reveal God as father. I have made known unto them thy name.

I have given them thy name. The name of God which was most on the lips of the Lord Jesus was the name father. And God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts.

Whereby we say the same thing as the Lord Jesus said. By the same spirit that was in him. Whereby we say Abba, father.

Now that is of course very elementary. But there is a very great battle for this family conception. If some organization gets broken up, we don't worry very much about that.

Not even if the United Nations breaks up, we don't worry very much about that. But we are always filled with grief and shame when a family breaks up. We feel that there is something about a family which carries a very sacred idea.

What a bad thing it is when a family becomes divided. When children are against one another or children are against parents. When the husband is against the wife and the wife against the husband.

And so on. And that is a mark of the devil's work at the end of the dispensation. There is nothing more terrible in our time than the break up of family life.

That is true, isn't it? You may not know very much about that in Switzerland. But you go to the United Kingdom. You go to America.

And to other countries. And you will see that there is a perfect landslide in this matter. The lists of divorces are terrible.

The poor children who are left without father or mother because of the break up of that relationship. This is a blow at the deepest thing in the heart of God. But it does not stay there.

The most distressing aspect of this whole thing is in the family of God. There is nothing more terrible in this universe than the break up of God's family. The devil does not so much mind our denominations and our organizations.

But he does object to this family business. It is God's most cherished idea. I think it is one of the most precious things of times together like these.

Here we are representing quite a number of different nationalities. Many of us have never met before on this earth. We have not shaken hands with one another yet.

But we are all rejoicing here together as a family. The family spirit is the most precious thing. And it is the very hallmark of the heavenly Israel.

I have often said in speaking about this heavenly Jerusalem as it is presented symbolically at the end of the Bible that it only has one street. Our hymn writers have led us astray on this. They talk about the streets of gold.

The Bible says there is only one street of gold. Dear friends, we've got to live on one street for all eternity. What do you say about that? How are you going to get on with your neighbors? Don't worry, it will be a very happy thing to live on one street.

You see, it will just be a family. And when the whole family is just one, it's not a bad thing to live next door to each other. Well, that's just a way of speaking of this.

You know what I mean. This is a spiritual relationship. Father, big elder brother, an all-uniting Holy Spirit, holy brethren, companions in a heavenly call.

It's a glorious thing to have companionship. Well, I leave that there. This very first idea of God in the old Israel is carried over spiritually to the new Israel.

The second thing, as you will see, is the house of God. Chapter 3 of Hebrews and verse 5. Moses indeed was faithful in all God's house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken of about Christ as a Son over God's house Whose house are we if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end? You notice what that said. Moses was faithful in all God's house for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken.

When is the afterward? It is now. Whose house are we? The house of God is something carried over in principle by God from the old to the new. Peter says that we are a spiritual house.

But there is one thing that needs to be made quite clear here. When we use this word house, we usually think of a place in which people live. And that is not the meaning of the word here.

I don't know whether you can understand the change that I'm going to make. Do you know the difference between a house and a household? A household is quite a different thing from a house. The household is two things.

One is the people who dwell there. And the other is the order that exists there. It is a house with a certain kind of order.

This is God's house composed of His people who are under His order. You know God is a God of order. He is not only concerned to have things done.

He is concerned to have them done in His way. It matters just as much to God how things are done as whether they are done at all. God's house is a house which is ordered by God.

Everyone in this household has to be in subjection to the Spirit of God. Has to come under the headship of Jesus Christ. Now of course I could take the whole conference on the house of God.

But if you look into God's ordering of the life of Israel in the old dispensation you will see how particular God was as to what was done and how it was done. On the day of Pentecost God's spiritual and heavenly house was brought in. And God had His own order.

And you will see how in those first days of the life of the church two things were happening. God was demanding that His order should be observed. Even the apostles had not come to fully recognize God's order.

They were holding on to something of the old order. And when the Lord told Peter to go to the house of Cornelius the Gentile Peter said, not so Lord. This is not according to the old order.

I was not brought up this way. The old system says I mustn't do that. No Lord.

But the Lord is Lord of His own house. And He made it perfectly clear to Peter that He had brought in a new order. This was a new Israel.

Things have changed. The cross has made the great change. All not that which God hath cleansed unclean.

The cross has dealt with all uncleanness. We are moving on a new basis. Well, Peter came to see it.

Of course that was not the end of the difficulty even for Peter. But I think when we get to Peter's letters we get to a Peter who has fully accepted the new order. A spiritual house, says he.

Offering spiritual sacrifices and so on. But I was saying that in the Acts you have two things. There is the movement of the Spirit of God concerning the new order.

But there is the movement of the evil spirit against that new order. You have that terrible episode of Ananias and Sapphira. They violated the new order of God's house.

They brought in their own personal interests. And Peter summed it up in this way. Why has Satan filled thy heart to lie against the Holy Ghost? For that terrible day the new order was upset.

Satan struck a blow at this new Israel. And to show how jealous God is for his heavenly order. See what happened to those two.

God has therefore laid down the principle very clearly. That he is very jealous for his heavenly order. And that nothing but trouble can follow if we get out of God's order.

While God's order is suspended everything is in confusion. Well that's enough about the house of God for the time being. Whose house are we? Then another conception.

That is the heirs of God. That is introduced with the Lord Jesus himself. In verse 2 of chapter 1. In verse 14 we are spoken of as heirs of salvation.

In verse 14 we are spoken of as heirs of salvation. Now in the earthly sense Israel were to be God's heirs. The promise was made to Abraham that his seed should inherit the earth.

God covenanted with Abraham that his seed should be the possessor. Israel was to be God's heir. They ought to have become joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

But they killed God's heir. They said as in the parable of the Lord Jesus this is the heir come let us kill him. They killed him who was appointed heir of all things.

And in so doing they robbed themselves of the inheritance. Now comes in the church. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The church is the heirs of the promise made to Abraham now. And his whole letter to the Hebrews has to do with the inheritance. The great inheritance to which we are called.

As the companions of the heavenly calling. And the appeal of this whole letter to us is see that you don't miss the inheritance. They lost it through unbelief.

You can lose the inheritance. So the letter uses Israel by way of illustration. The terrible possibility of Christians losing the inheritance.

You notice this little word if that occurs so often. We are made companions of Christ if we hold fast the beginning from end to the end. Whose house are we if we hold fast.

That's a very big word that little word. A lot hangs on that word. We are not talking about the loss of eternal life.

We are talking about the purpose of salvation. The purpose of salvation is a very much more important thing even than being saved. Paul says that there will be a lot of people who get into heaven having lost everything.

All their life work will go up in smoke. They themselves will be saved yet so as by fire. Everything but their salvation lost.

You want to just get into heaven yet so as by fire. Now this letter says there is something more than being saved. That is the great inheritance.

We can miss that. Read the letter again in the light of that. But our point is that this principle of being heirs of God is carried over into the heavenly Israel.

I will just mention one or two other things without very much comment. The next thing that is carried over from the old to the new is the city of God. You look into this letter you will find that on several occasions the city is referred to.

And in that passage which we read we are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city. Now Israel of course had their life centered in the old earthly Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of their unity.

They were all united because of that city. That is why their males had to go up to Jerusalem so many times every year. We have those wonderful sounds of ascent.

They came from the north and the south and the east and the west. Wonderful caravan to Jerusalem. They were singing the songs of Zion.

Those songs about Zion are wonderful songs. Glorifying in their city. And finding the expression of their national unity in Jerusalem.

And they found the expression of their national unity in their city Jerusalem. It was the center of their government. Their whole national life came out from Jerusalem in government.

But Jerusalem was everything to them. The writer to this letter to the Hebrews is speaking about the approaching day when that will have gone forever. Or to satisfy the people who believe that the Jews are yet to occupy Palestine and have another Jerusalem.

It was gone for a whole dispensation. Jerusalem today is the very symbol of division. Jews have one bit and Arabs have another.

And they cannot live in peace together. It's the symbol of disunion. With God it does not stand.

It has been given over. But he has brought in his heavenly Jerusalem. We are come to the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem.

We have been made to sit with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All our unity as the new Israel is centered in him above. There will never be true expression of unity amongst the Lord's people only when they have a heavenly uniting Lord.

Our unity is in heaven not on earth. Our government is from heaven not from earth. As Paul says, we are fellow citizens with the saints.

As Paul says, we are fellow citizens with the saints. Yes, the city exists. God's thought concerning the city has been carried over to the spiritual Israel.

The thought of God concerning a city has been carried over to the spiritual Israel. The flock of God. If that Israel was God's family.

The house of God. The heir of God. The city of God.

So Israel was thought of as God's flock. God's sheep. He led them like a shepherd it says.

That idea of course lies behind the cry of the prophet Isaiah. All we like sheep have gone astray. Israel was God's flock.

He was Israel's shepherd. We shall dwell more fully upon that later. Indeed it's a very large matter in this new relationship to the Lord.

One of our sixteen things in John's Gospel. But God has carried this over. It's a very precious thought of God concerning the heavenly Israel.

We are the sheep of His pasture. So when we come to the end of this letter to the Hebrews. Then we have this beautiful word.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep. Our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep. There is a sense in which that spreads itself back over the whole letter.

The companions of Christ are His sheep. My sheep know me and I know them. My sheep hear my voice.

And they follow me. I give unto them eternal life. That's a grand idea for sheep isn't it.

We'll just leave it there for the time being. I remind you of the last thing and close for this morning. It is the kingdom of God.

We all know that Israel of old was God's kingdom. The kingdom over which God was king. Do you remember that when they chose Saul to be king.

Samuel was very distressed about this. And he went to the Lord and told him about it. The Lord said they have not rejected you.

They have rejected me from being king. Israel was God's kingdom. And of course the Old Testament has a very great deal to say about that.

When we come into this new Israel. What a lot there is in this letter to the Hebrews about the kingdom. I will not ask you for the moment to look at all the references.

But the last of them is this. Wherefore receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The Greek tense is being in process of receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken.

We are his kingdom. People under his kingship and government. We have much more to say about that later.

But I think we have said enough this morning to show that this is a very real thing. In a spiritual way we have come into all that which was foreshadowed in Israel of old. In a spiritual way we have come into all that which was foreshadowed in Israel of old.

To that Israel the Lord Jesus said. The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Said we are a holy nation.

The inheritors of all that God ever meant for his people. In us that is in his true church of this dispensation. God is in process of realizing all that which he had foreshadowed through many many centuries.

Well these are many words. They are wonderful ideas. But I hope they go further than our heads.

I hope they go to our hearts. I hope they go to our hearts. We are a very privileged people.

The great need of our time is for Christians to know what God has called them unto. They do not know dear friends. You can go over this world and find Christians in the majority who have no idea of these things.

They know that Jesus came into the world as the son of God. He lived his wonderful life. Did his work.

Gave his teaching. Died an atoning death. And rose again.

And is coming again. But they don't know one bit of what it all means. That is what it is all unto.

The great eternal purpose of God in it all. They are mostly quite ignorant of the things about which we have been speaking today. And that is why Christianity is in such a deplorable state today.

They have not been given true instruction. They have not a true understanding of God's great purpose in his church through Christ Jesus. It is a very wonderful thing that we have come into in this dispensation.

And I say again I hope it goes to your heart and deeper than your heads. And when I have said all this your heads may be tired. You may be feeling that just now you can't think much more.

Sorry to tell you I have only just at the beginning. There is much more of this very thing that God has to reveal yet. And a little more perhaps he will show us this week.

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