

The Name of the Lord in Zion

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the significance of Zion as the embodiment of the Name of the Lord, highlighting the need for spiritual authority and maturity in the church today.

Scripture: Exodus 15:13

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "The Authority of God's Name"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of Zion as the holy habitation of God, where His name is declared with power and authority. He reflects on the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Zion, illustrating that while they experienced a foretaste of glory, they were also in a process of spiritual growth and maturity. The sermon highlights the need for the church to recover the authority of Jesus' name, which embodies spiritual power and governance, urging believers to rise above earthly concerns and embrace their heavenly identity. Sparks calls for a deeper understanding of the name of the Lord in Zion, which signifies God's satisfaction and the transformative power available to those who align with His purpose. Ultimately, he challenges the church to ascend to higher spiritual ground to fully experience the glory and authority of God's name.

Transcript

"Thou in thy lovingkindness hast led the people that thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation... Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex. 15:13,17).

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" (Ps. 24:3).

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1).

"For the Lord hath built up Zion; he hath appeared in his glory... that men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion" (Ps. 102:16,21).

A Present Foretaste of Glory

The above passage in the book of Exodus is very remarkable in this respect, that the reaching of Zion, the holy habitation, the hill of the Lord -- for so it proved to be eventually -- is spoken of as though it were

already an accomplished fact at the beginning of the history of Israel as a nation; for Exodus 15 occurs when Israel is only just out of Egypt and just over the Red Sea. The inspired song sees the end at once and brings it right forward, and the people are, in spirit, in the good of the end right at the outset. It is the language of accomplished fact. "Thou hast led... thou hast guided... to thy holy habitation..." There you have New Testament history crammed into a very small compass of words; because right at the beginning of the church's history, when the book of the Acts opens, you are only just past Calvary, you are just out of the authority of darkness, but the whole spirit and atmosphere is of present attainment of the end. The Lord's people there are undoubtedly, in spirit and enjoyment -- at the end of the journey. They have arrived. They have come to Zion. They have ascended into the hill of the Lord, and it is with glory men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion. Thus it was right at the beginning. Whenever the Lord brings in part of His purpose of the ages, He always brings it in with glory. The bringing in is always accompanied by a sense of fullness, attainment and realization. It has always been like that, and those who were there at the time felt, "We have reached the end, we are there!" That was the spirit of it.

You know that is how you feel when you get truly and soundly born again. At the time you feel there is nothing more to be done; you are ready for glory, heaven has arrived! No one can tell you anything, teach you anything! It is that spirit of youth which says: I have more understanding than all my teachers! It is all glory. God has broken in so far as you are concerned. It is the coming of the great purpose of the ages, and you have arrived. So it is whenever the Lord comes in like that. He gives at the beginning an experience, a vision, a consciousness, a realization, of the greatness and the glory of His purpose; we are just full of it. That is how they were in those first days of the church's history.

A Process Begun

But then the tense changes -- "Thou wilt bring them in..." -- and it is not long before you discover that it is not only that you have a present foretaste, but also you are in a process begun -- you have arrived, but you have to go yet some way before you do arrive. There is a glorious paradox about it all. The Holy Spirit has touched the end at the beginning, and then He has taken up that end to make it more than just a sensation, just an ecstasy -- to make it an inward reality. Although on that day, when they were just over the Red Sea, Israel did sing so lustily about having arrived, they had to learn that in spiritual geography there was a long way to go for that to become something more than just a sense of things, however great that sense might be.

What is the Lord doing when He combines these tenses, bringing these two things together -- the realization that we are come to Mount Zion and yet that we have a long way to go, and something has yet to be done? The Lord knows us very well. He knows realities. He does not build upon nebulous, abstract foundations. He is going to have real people -- very real people. As we said earlier, the Lord's spiritual people are the greatest realists on earth. They know increasingly how real everything is that is spiritual. Such things become almost desperately real. This is not merely something in the mind, this is something tremendously real. Those forces of evil are very, very real. The ground which they have in the broken-down humanity which is ours is very, very real ground. Everything that has to do with the spiritual life is very real indeed, and the Lord is the great Realist where we are concerned. He is going to have nothing that is merely an emotion. He gives the foretaste, the earnest, and then He says, "Now I am going to set to work to make that your real position". When at length the hundred and forty-four thousand are found with the Lamb on Mount Zion, you notice by the context that they are not a people who have come there merely on an emotion or an ecstasy or a teaching. They have come through things. They are not only in the truth, the truth is in them.

That brings us at once to this further spoke in the wheel of which we were speaking earlier, the very hub of which is Zion. It brings us to this, the Name of the Lord in Zion. Looking at the actual spiritual counterpart of all this Old Testament teaching about Zion -- Pentecost, the Lord Jesus -- what is the thing that is so very much in evidence from that moment; the thing that is more on the lips of the apostles than anything else, and which constitutes the dynamic of their ministry, their testimony, their work? Is it not the name of Jesus? And this is no mere designation, this is a mighty registration. That Name carries with it all the impact and force of heaven. Nothing can stand before that Name. World powers will seek to withstand, but they will be broken. Herod may seek to destroy the servants of the Lord and the church, but he will be destroyed out of hand. The Lord in every realm in the book of the Acts gives evidence that the name of Jesus is no ordinary name. "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name." It is the Name of exaltation, ascension.

Zion the Embodiment of the Name

Zion is the embodiment of the Name. Take the history of Zion again. It is the city of David, "the city of the great King". It is the greatest name in Israel's history. It embodies the greatest glory of their national life. The greater than David has ascended up on high, the angelic hosts have burst forth in their festal song -- "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in" (Ps. 24:7). In the New Testament we have a very similar title given to the Lord Jesus -- "they... crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8); and, again, we read, "Ye... killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3:14,15). "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion". Zion is the name of supreme power, supreme glory; and in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, "of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). Zion then means the power and glory and sovereignty of the name of the Lord Jesus as a mighty working power, registering itself upon things spiritual and sometimes upon things temporal, a name which carries with it all authority in heaven and in earth. It is the Name of authority.

The Need to Recover the Authority of the Name

Now I suggest to you -- and I expect I have your immediate agreement -- that what is needed today is the recovery of the authority of the name of Jesus in the church. We use it so frequently, it comes into our language and phraseology, but we know all too little of its virtue. I am not suggesting to you now that we should seek after demonstrations in physical and temporal realms of the power and authority of the name of the Lord Jesus, but rather that what we need is the presence of the power of the Name, as something which weakens all other powers. For me that means something very much more than just demonstrations in the temporal realm. What we really do need is a power, a force at work which goes right on, persists and overcomes in a quiet, silent, steady way -- when all the adverse forces are at work to frustrate, we go right on and become irresistible in a spiritual way. The thing goes on, the work is done. You marvel that it is so, when you take account of all that is set against it. That which is of interest to the Lord really does hold on its way, and not only maintains its existence, but increases, and there is nothing to account for this in any other realm than that there is somewhere a mighty divine force at work; and do what they may and will, neither the naked powers of evil nor their instrumentalities can stop it.

I believe that was the outworking of things at the beginning. You have demonstrations in the book of the Acts, but that book is a book of principles; that is, it is a book in which the Lord in the foundation of the church, in the beginning of the dispensation, is making it very plain that certain spiritual things are very real. He may remove the ways in which He does make that plain, but the reality goes on, and when you

think about it, you would prefer it like that. No one wants to have a continuous, everyday repetition of the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. Do you want to see in any of the companies of the Lord's people men and women literally stricken down and carried out because they sinned against the Holy Ghost? No, but what we do want to know is that people are made aware of the fact that they cannot withstand the Holy Ghost with impunity, that it is a very dangerous thing to spiritual life and it may be to the physical also -- to stand in the way of the exalted Christ. What we want is to see that Christ is Lord in His house -- but not by just physical and temporal demonstrations. It is the mighty working of a spiritual power, where everything is very real and the Lord is Lord.

That is the principle of the Name. It is a great spiritual authority at work and nothing can withstand the goings. Oh, it is a great thing! I often think that Gamaliel was more inspired than we have imagined or than he knew. He did indeed utter a great truth when he said, "If it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:39). It is a hopeless thing to get in God's way. "If it be of God...". That is the only assurance you and I want -- that a thing is of God. If it be not of God, then our prayer is, The Lord save us from it! But if it be of God, let all forces combine, let all tongues wag, let all devices be resorted to -- it will go on! Why? Because the Name of the Lord is going to be declared in Zion. It is this mighty meaning of the Name of the Lord. It is the Name of transcendent power. That is the fact, and that is what we are concerned with.

Then, of course, there comes the challenge. They did not actually stay on mount Zion very long, even in the book of the Acts. Positionally, of course, the church is always there, but actually not always so. We were saying in our previous meditation that the church made the earth-touch all too soon. So at Corinth you find believers at strife, and saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos" (1 Cor. 1:12). This is making something of other names, and even bringing the exalted Name down in spirit to the level of an earthly party -- "I am of Christ". Human likes and dislikes, preferences, antipathies and sympathies, and all the activities of human judgment, an earth-touch with a fallen creation, have made something of other names, and the glory of the Name is veiled.

Or you go to Galatia, and you find they have come down from Zion and have gone to Sinai. That is to say, they have brought everything to the level of legalistic Old Testament religion -- Judaism again with its legal bondage -- and the glory and the power of the Name are once more suspended. Wherever this is found to be the case, the underlying cause is ever the same. You can only know the mighty operation of that ascension power of the exalted Lord, as represented by His name, if you stay up with Him in Zion. Come down to earth in spirit, and you lose it, you forfeit it.

The Need to Get On to Higher Ground

Now, that is capable of such wide and varied application that we could never cover the ground. But we can say this in an inclusive, comprehensive way: for all the laws of spiritual power, effectiveness and glory, the need is higher ground. I would say that of almost every situation of which I know where the glory is veiled, the power has gone, and anything but Zion conditions prevail. Corinthians, you are all divided up against one another, suspecting one another, preferring, choosing; and what is your state?

You are in a state of chaos and defeat. Your need is higher ground. As believers, you have to get off this ground of mankind. If you and I, as the Lord's people who bear His Name, come down on to human ground with one another, we forsake the power and glory and working of that Name. It is not that we are going to live a make-believe life. We are very real people, and the people we have to do with are very real

people too. They are very awkward, they have their weaknesses, their flaws, their faults, and many things difficult to put up with, even though they be the Lord's people.

And you know quite well that, while you are taking account of people as they are in nature it is keeping you down, and keeping everything down, and the glory is being excluded and the power is suspended. The Holy Spirit, being within all the truly born-again children of God, constitutes and provides another kind of ground upon which we have definitely to place our feet. We have deliberately and persistently to regard the matter in this way: "So-and-so is of such a kind, and there is this and that about him, and if I proceed on purely natural grounds I shall not go on far with him; I shall eliminate him, and not have any fellowship with him.

He is a child of God, the Holy Spirit is as much in him as in me by new birth; and he might find just as many wrongs and faults and weaknesses about me as I do about him. But we have a common ground, which is not that natural ground at all. It is the ground of Christ, and I have deliberately to trust Christ in my brother. It may be some time before He gets the upper hand there and gets what He is after, but I trust the Lord concerning him and take my hands off, and believe that the Lord can do a great thing there".

Some of us would never have gone on very long with some people but for a deliberate taking of that attitude. Do you think that my brethren would have continued with me during all these years if they had not taken that attitude? They have had much to put up with, but there is something that God has done which transcends that. It is an inwrought love of God and it is an inwrought determination not to allow the natural side of things to be the ultimate criterion. There is a recognition that, however little there is, there is something of the Lord to reckon upon, and we are in His hands, and we are just going on trusting Him.

That is very practical, and it is only in that way that the enemy is defeated and the Lord is glorified. Do you think the name of the Lord is glorified by divisions and strivings and conflicts, which come about because of natural conditions of temperament, disposition, and so on? No, there has been more dishonour brought to the Name of the Lord in that way than perhaps in any other. The Name of the Lord has to be glorified in Zion; that means spiritual ascendancy, the taking of higher ground. That is the personal application of it.

I will carry you much more easily with me when I make the corporate application. You will agree when I say that, speaking generally, the glory and power of the Name of the Lord Jesus are not to be found in the church today as they should be, simply because the church has come down to such an earthly level, and is so largely a thing of this world. It has lost the heavenly vision and its heavenly position. It has become a thing of orders and rites. As a matter of fact, the church very largely -- of course, with notable and blessed exceptions -- has tried to reconstruct an Old Testament situation in this age. You have a thing that is seen down here on the earth, with all its accompaniments, its system of vestments and what not, a reconstruction of the whole Jewish system in the Christian age, and called "Christian". No wonder the Name has gone out, and the power; it is no longer a heavenly thing. And so, however you look at it, and wherever you touch it, the Lord has shown right at the beginning that, if the church is to be in the mighty power of the Name of the Lord Jesus, it has to leave its low levels and be in the place of the Name spiritually. The picture is quite simple, the picture of this going up to Jerusalem three times in a year of a representative company in the old dispensation.

God Governs by Spiritual Maturity

Well, the day came when the going up was due, and what happened? They left their own hamlets and villages and towns and cities wherever they were, as insular, as apart, as distant; they left it all and came

away from their insularity, their dividedness, their separateness, and all came up on to one mount, where their oneness in a heavenly place was the great reality. And how blessed a thing it was for them! And the Lord established that as a testimony three times in every year, saying to them thereby, "Israel, you are not so many isolated, separate units, scattered everywhere, living your own little village life or even your own great city life. You are one people belonging to another city which is above: your names are enrolled in heaven, you are the church of the firstborn ones."

Oh, the amount there is in the Word of God to bear this out! Take Joshua 21, for example. There you have the forty-eight Levitical cities. The Levites took the place of the firstborn in all Israel, and so became in type the church of the firstborn ones. They were given cities. What are the cities? They are the local representations of THE city, that is all. They have no meaning except in their central relatedness to THE city. They are, so to speak, just microcosms of the one city of God. They are the city everywhere expressed; forty-eight -- four times twelve -- governmental order. Twelve is the number of government, and twelve is all the time found associated with God's people. Israel -- twelve tribes. Twelve runs right through to the twenty-first chapter of the book of the Revelation. And firstborn SONS, the church of the firstborn ones, signify that. Sonship is the full thought of God. When you touch sonship in God's thought, you touch maturity in fullness, completeness of spiritual realization. "Ye are come unto mount Zion... to the church of the firstborn" (Heb.12:22,23).

Well, the Levites of Joshua 21 and their forty-eight Levitical cities are just one of the many types of this great truth, that God's thought for His people is spiritual maturity, spiritual fullness, by which He governs the world. It is a spiritual government. Oh, do I need to stop with it? You know as well as I do that the people who have gone on most with the Lord, who are most spiritually mature, are the people who really govern. They may be thoroughly inadequate in this world, they may have none of the advantages that others have here, but they know the Lord, and they are the people who in spiritual matters come to the fore. Here we have the whole principle of leadership, which is not official at all. Government is vested in spiritual measure, it is a spiritual thing. Firstborn sons, the forty-eight cities -- it is all an expression of Zion, Zion gathers it all up. It is spiritual fullness, spiritual maturity by which God will govern.

The Power of the Name

It is very impressive to remember that when a name is given in the Bible, it always means something. You know the cities of the Pharaohs, and how they gave their names to their cities -- Ra amses for example. The city is the work of a man, it is produced by that man, and the name given means that the man is thoroughly well satisfied with his work, and he can give his name to the city. We do not, as a rule, let our names go on things of which we do not approve.

Here in Rev. 14 is Zion, and a company standing thereon, "having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads". That means that God has no hesitation whatever in putting His Name there; He is thoroughly satisfied. The name of Jesus simply means that God is completely and perfectly satisfied with the work that the Lord Jesus has done and has given Him "the name which is above every name". In the hundred and forty four thousand on mount Zion you have a company who have entered so thoroughly into the work of God in Christ that God does not hesitate to put His Name upon them. They bear His Name. It is Zion, with the Name of the Lord.

You see what that means. We have to come to the place where God is satisfied. And where is that? God is satisfied with nothing on this earth. It is only there in His Son in heaven, as not belonging at all to this

world, that God finds His satisfaction. The Name is there, and it is out from that perfect satisfaction of God that the Holy Spirit comes with all the power of the Name. And how mighty that Name has proved to be!

But something has happened. What is it? Look at the people concerned in Acts 2. First look back a few days. "They all left him, and fled" (Mark 14:50). They did not like to have themselves associated with His Name. "Are you one of His disciples? No, I am not, I have no connection with Him!" Ashamed of His Name. Then those two as they went on the way to Emmaus, how miserable they were, utterly in despair. Why? The answer is in one word -- earthliness. Their whole horizon had been earthly.

They had looked for the kingdom of God in terms of earthly, temporal power, prosperity, and position. Everything for them had been a matter of this earth, this present life down here and how things would affect them here and now, and that had proved their undoing. The cross had put an end to all their hopes. But then something happened. When Christ arose, by the space of forty days He repeatedly appeared unto them. The thing was happening; they were getting a new heavenly vision, a spiritual conception of things, a transformation of outlook: and then the Spirit came and put His great seal upon it all.

"My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) the Lord had said, and now they knew how true that was. All was heavenly, and no longer did that old idea of theirs hold them. When the Spirit came, they were men emancipated from this world, emancipated from the very strongest ties of which it is possible for man to conceive -- religious ties. Oh, how powerful were their Judaistic bonds! But they were emancipated now. The vision of Christ in glory did what no combined forces on this earth could have done with Saul of Tarsus.

It emancipated him from his Judaism. I consider that one of the greatest miracles of the New Testament -- the translation in spirit of a man from earth to heaven in an instant by revelation; complete emancipation. That is the realm of the power of the Name. That is the nature of things where the glory of the Name is manifested. We need a new apprehension of what it means to be seated together with Christ in the heavenlies, a real spiritual experience of emancipation from things here in all our concerns and anxieties: so free from things here that we are in possession of everything!

Paul said, "All (things) are yours". Life is yours, death is yours, the world is yours, all things are yours (1 Cor. 3:21-23). To understand what that means is tremendous spiritual uplift. It means, in a word, that you have come into the place where the heavens do rule, and whatever the Lord wants you to have, you will have it: no matter what men or devils say about it, it is yours. Priorities? You will not get any priorities here, but you can have priorities every time if the Lord wants you to.

No one knows how it is done. You may be at the bottom of the waiting list, but if the Lord requires it you go to the top. Transport or anything is yours if the Lord wants it. That is a glorious position to be in. We are quite content not to have a thing if the Lord does not want it, but if we have it in our hearts that the Lord wants it, we have a right to go to heaven and take it; it is ours. You find it works out like that. Somehow or other it comes about when everybody says that it is impossible -- it just comes about, it happens.

The heavens do rule for those who belong to heaven, and live in heaven. We need to know there is a mighty authority in the Name; but in all its forms of manifestation it demands that you are in the heavenly position. The Name is impotent when you are touching this earth in voluntary association. But be in the place of the Name, then ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done. If we only know the place of the Name with regard to everything, we have the key to the whole situation. The Lord make us understand more what the Name of the Lord is in Zion.

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