

The Place of God in His House

by T. Austin-Sparks

The fulness of the Lord is achieved when we recognize and submit to God's Lordship, allowing Him to receive His full place in our lives.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-7, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 11:1-2, Isaiah 42:1-4, Isaiah 52:13 - 53:3, Isaiah 61:1-3, Acts 1:13, Acts 2:37, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Submission to Christ", "God's Lordship"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of God's place in His house, drawing from Isaiah 6:1-7, where Isaiah sees the Lord exalted on His throne. He highlights that true fulfillment of God's plan requires recognizing Christ's lordship and the necessity of submission to Him. The sermon illustrates how the glory of God fills the temple, leaving no room for human efforts or self-interest, and stresses that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is contingent upon Christ being Lord in our lives. Sparks connects Isaiah's vision to the New Testament, showing that the church must be characterized by submission and love to attain the fullness of Christ. Ultimately, he calls for a complete surrender to God's will, allowing Him to be all in all.

Transcript

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-7.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'"

God has intended great things for His people. He watches over the realization of His plan. We do well to have recognized the basis on which God completes His thoughts for us. If we long to see God's full thought for us accomplished, if we yearn for the fulness of Jesus Christ, then we have to know where God starts, we have to discern the secret that governs God's fulness. In Isaiah 6, we find the key for this. Great things are put before us. It is hardly necessary to say much about the place the Lord Jesus Christ has in

Isaiah. His prophecies are well-known enough for us to understand that they are all fulfilled in Christ.

In chapter 9, we find the familiar words:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

In chapter 11:1,2:

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

Then Isaiah 61:1-3, takes us further to the public ministry of the Lord, and we immediately hear Him say the words:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."

In Isaiah 42:1-4, we see Jesus Christ as the suffering Servant of God:

"Behold, My Servant, Whom I uphold; My Chosen, in Whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will He not break, and a dimly burning wick will He not quench: He will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set justice in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."

Isaiah 52:13-15, we see the Lord Jesus exalted and extolled:

"Behold, My Servant shall deal wisely, He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at Thee, (His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men): So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

And then we are taken further to the Cross, the great fifty-third chapter, and beyond the Cross to His reign.

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.... Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide

Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:1-3, 10-12)

Thus we have in Isaiah a comprehensive presentation of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The people of Israel did not fulfil the thought of God. Captivity was the only way left for them. Because God wanted to demonstrate His plan for His people, it was necessary to cut them off from the place of His glory, Jerusalem. A large section of Isaiah points to the captivity which awaited them.

But our attention is now drawn to the context in which Isaiah sees all of these events. Even the captivity stands in connection to the Lord on His throne. What else does this mean, except the irrefutable assurance that God's will will be done, that God's plan will be fully realized. But if God wants to reach His goal, then He Himself has to create the prerequisite for fulfilment in His people. Therefore He must educate His people in the school of suffering, by way of purging, so that they will be willing to walk in the way of His thoughts, to act with the deepest interest from the heart for His will to be done.

We find in Isaiah 60 a remnant, those who have become ready for the full realization of the will of God. In reference to them the Word says: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

What does the glory of the Lord consist of? Nothing else but Jesus Christ Himself. He is the glory of God. In Him all God's thoughts and desires in relation to His people are fulfilled.

Isaiah writes: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple" (ASV).

This sentence, "In the year that king Uzziah died" is immensely important. Let us recall the history of this king. He was the king that dared to appropriate the things of God. The priests had warned him: "It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord." But he became enraged. He forced his will through. The Lord struck him. Leprosy broke out on his forehead. He fled from the presence of the Lord. He died as a leper and--"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord." Isaiah sees Him, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Did Uzziah believe he could put himself in God's place? Did he believe he could become proficient in the things pertaining to God? He had dared to want to be king in God's house. He had dared to act with natural power, instead of in the Spirit alone. Then God opposed him and struck him. "You have tried to take My place. This cannot be. This is My house. You must make room for Me." Then Uzziah fled. He died, overcome by the judgment of God (2 Chron. 26:16-23; RSV).

The next thing that Isaiah tells us is this: "The glory of the Lord filled the temple." He saw the Lord on the throne, the throne belonging to Him alone. This is the beginning in Isaiah. This is the beginning of all things that are God's.

If we want to reach the fulness of Jesus Christ in our life, then God must receive the place in our life that is due to Him. Then He must be the Lord in us, to Whom everything in us bows and Whose will we do entirely.

If we take Isaiah's vision over into the New Testament, we see it confirmed there in the fullest measure. In Acts 1 we have a new beginning and we see two things there:

Christ in heaven, lofty and exalted, sitting on a throne, and: "Men of Galilee."

Nazareth was in Galilee. In a certain sense it was a 'forecourt'. One of the messages of the angels had said: "He goeth before you into Galilee." That had a special meaning. Galilee lay outside of the official religious centre. Had not Jerusalem refused the Lord Jesus Christ the rights due to Him? Jerusalem had given the Lord of glory no room. They had rejected Him. They had taken what belonged to God into their own hands. That is why the Lord leaves Jerusalem. He goes to Galilee. He goes to where He is recognized. "Men of Galilee". It does not say: "Men of Jerusalem".

In Acts 1:13 we read: "They went up into the upper chamber." They did not go to the temple. The temple was the officially recognized centre of religiosity in Jerusalem. But they did not go there. They went to the upper room. They went to that place which in a vivid way speaks of separation: separation from everything that is only tradition and form. It speaks in a pictorial way of elevation, of that which is higher, separated from the earthly, because it is purposed to be heavenly.

We find Peter and John amongst those who are men tioned first. It is not insignificant that the new name of Peter is found at the beginning. Peter had gone through a deep experience. Peter had learned. He had learned a great deal. There had been a time in which he had raised objections at every opportunity. When the Lord wanted to go to the Cross, he had said: "This shall never be unto Thee." When Jesus wanted to wash his feet, Peter had said: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Despite all his love for the Lord, Peter was clearly self-conscious as well as strongly assertive of his own opinions. But he had learned. When we read his Letters we see that he has much to say regarding submission. The Lord now has the place and room in Peter that He deserved!

This is the reason why his name is mentioned first in the church, because the church must be distinguished by the fact that in her the Lord has the first place. Everything depends on her being totally subjected to Him. Only thus can He fill His house.

But we also read of John. Peter and John are often mentioned together. They belong together. Where there is subjection to the Lord, there is also love. Where self-interest reigns, there is no love. But where there is true submission, we meet love, so that both submission and love form the basis on which the fulness of Jesus Christ is attained.

Could the rushing wind from heaven have been ignored? Hardly. It was too mighty. But in reference to the direction of this wind we need to take note that it came from heaven. It was not a matter of a north, south, east or west wind. It concerned a wind from a unique direction, as a sign that the Lord had taken up His throne to send from heaven the Spirit of power, Who works resurrection in His own people and gives power to testify. Nothing can happen before Christ has taken up His place in heaven. And similarly in us there can be no fulness of Christ as long as we deny Him the throne of our heart.

In his description of the events, Luke is persistently accurate. It was said to be a mighty rushing wind. That is nothing else but a storm. What can we do in a storm? Whoever has been in a real storm knows how helpless one is. There is no point in standing up to the storm. It takes us and carries us away. Through this storm from heaven the Lordship of the Spirit is expressed. The Spirit wants to reign. He does not need our help. Our plans and programs are only in His way. The Spirit alone knows what God wants. Only He knows the hour of God. Only He disposes of the means; only His is the power. The things of God that aim at the fulness of Christ are too big for us to achieve. In theory we admit this. We agree with this from time to time, not without sighing, when once again our plans have come to nothing, when that which we have

undertaken for the Lord with the best of intentions has failed. But in practice we continue our own activities. Things are set up and organized. We work and suffer for God--so often in vain....

The whole house in which they sat was filled. Everything is pushed out. There is room for nothing else. It reminds us of the dedication of the temple of Solomon. When the temple was completed and filled with the glory of the Lord, the priests had to leave the temple of God. They could not stay there because of His glory. That means when the Lord fills His house, there is no room left for anything human. Everything that does not submit itself to Him, that does not open itself to Him in love, that is not completely available to Him must go out.

And then tongues of fire appeared. Tongues are figurative of a testimony. The testimony that Christ was crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven and highly exalted, was there. It was there in a living way in those that had become witnesses of the great deeds of God, and in whom Christ lived in the power of His resurrected life.

Fire on the other hand speaks of judgment. Fire pierces through. Fire tests. It did not take long before the people on the day of Pentecost cried out: "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The fire had tested their hearts. Everything was connected to the issue of the full Lordship of Jesus Christ.

What is the secret of the fulness of the Lord? It is complete submission to Him, so that He receives His full place in those that are His house. Without this there is no fulness of the Holy Spirit. Christ must become Lord in our hearts. He must become Lord in all things pertaining to our life. Christ must become Lord over our thoughts, our desires and over our inclinations. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

There we are, back to Isaiah. Isaiah, who by his prophecy is called to lead us to the fulness of the riches of Christ, sees God and cries out: "Woe is me! for I am undone." It is like that everywhere where the Lord has come to be Lord. Whether it concerns the upper chamber where the disciples are united together, the individual, or any local representation of the church in our day: if God is to achieve His full goal in His temple, then we must recognize His Lordship and bow before Him, so that God can really be ALL, AND IN ALL.

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