

# The Relatedness of All Else

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The ultimate issue in this universe is worship, and everything else is related to it.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:8, Revelation 21:22, Revelation 22:3

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "Worship"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the ultimate issue of worship in the universe, linking it to the relationship between God, the Lamb, and the absence of the curse. He explains that all aspects of the Bible and Christian life must be viewed through the lens of worship, which is the central theme that connects every doctrine and practice. Sparks warns against the tendency to isolate biblical truths from their ultimate purpose, which is to glorify God and affirm His supremacy. He highlights that true Christian service and experience are rooted in the acknowledgment of God's rights and the rejection of any mixture that detracts from pure worship. Ultimately, the sermon calls believers to recognize that every action and belief should lead to a greater worship of God, as He is the temple and the focus of all creation.

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## Transcript

Reading: Rev. 21:22; 22:3; Matt. 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:28.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

"... That God may be all in all."

"... The Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof."

In our previous meditation, we first of all pointed out that the words in the closing chapters of the Revelation contained the three factors which sum up the spiritual history of this universe - the three factors, The Lord God the Almighty, the Lamb, no more curse. We pointed out that the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are linked into the temple; they are the temple, and in being so linked, they represent the ultimate issue of this universe, which is worship. Then after that, the curse and the Lamb are connected in that they respectively signify the challenge to the Lord God the Almighty, and the answer to that challenge - the Lamb. The curse is the consequence of the challenge to the unquestioned and unreserved worship of God. The Lamb has taken up that challenge of the curse and answered it, with the result that the curse at length is gone forever. The Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple; that is, worship is gathered up, centered in them.

We said then that the things that we have to recognize are these -

Firstly, the ultimate issue in this universe.

Secondly, the relatedness of all else thereto.

Thirdly, the way of its attainment.

In our previous meditation, we considered the first, the ultimate issue, which is worship. We sought to see that this matter of worship is set in a realm far greater than this earth, in a supernatural realm. Back in a dateless time and unspecified place, there arose through one a challenge to God's unique, undivided, unquestioned supremacy as the sole object of worship. We saw the result of that both in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. Then from that time we saw what we may call the cosmic conflict, that is, the super-earthly conflict in relation to the worship of God.

#### The Relatedness of the Bible

Now we go on with this second aspect - relatedness of all else to this issue. We are getting down now away from the broad expanses, the vast ranges, to practical details. We can only indicate some of the things related to this issue, and to begin with, of course, the Bible. The Bible has a great deal of detail. There are almost countless matters with which it deals, but you can sum the whole Bible up in this one question, this one all-inclusive matter. All the separate and particular things are to be seen in the light of this worship; that is, the outgoing of everything to God, the reversing of that whole course of things which came in with Satan's activity to draw to himself. That covers the Bible and, of course, all these details and these particular things in the Bible can only be seen in their full value, as they are set in their relatedness to this one governing reality.

We just stand back from our Bible and ask the question, What is it all about? What is THE issue involved in it all? The answer is - worship; if we understand what worship is. The tendency of godly people has always been to take things in the Bible in themselves, and to take them apart from their ultimate relationship. For instance, doctrines have been taken as things in themselves. Salvation as something in itself; prophecy has been detached and made something in itself; Christian work is in the Bible, but again it is made something in itself; the great revelation of the Church - yes, it is true, it is Scriptural, it is in the Bible, but again it has been made something in itself; or further, the churches, that THEY should be THE things in view, something in themselves. So we might go on. The result of that tendency has been confusion, limitation, weakness and arrest. What we are saying is, that everything must be kept in line with its object. It must be kept as on a main thoroughfare to some goal, to some end; it must not be in a side street as something in itself; this company of people circling round the doctrine of sanctification, with nothing else to talk about; that company of people round the Church; the other company about something else; and they are all living up side streets. Well, all these things are really, in God's thought, a chain with an ultimate clasp, an end, an object, and that object is worship, and what God means by worship. There is nothing in God's Word which is something in itself, ends with itself, or ends with the time in which it is uttered. It may have a specific application to a specific time, but there is something more in it than a time factor. Everything that comes from God carries with it an eternal law, the essence of God Himself, timeless and universal. It is related to God, and the one thing that links everything that has come from God with God is this matter of worship.

Now we have said something that we shall all take a lifetime to prove. There is nothing in the Bible which is an end in itself. You may take anything you like in the Bible; pick it up at random. The Ten Commandments - well, of course, the Ten Commandments belong to Israel, they are Jewish, they are the law, and that is past. Not a bit of it! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Does that belong to Jews only, to a certain time in the past? "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image... thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them." You have got outside the law of Israel, you are touching the rock-bottom principle; you compass Genesis to Revelation, and beyond, in that. All the other fragments of the Law, not only the Decalogue but the Law, all contain something which has to do with this ultimate question.

Marriage laws - you say, of course they are Divine arrangements for social life. Not a bit! There are the laws of business, weights and measures; there are laws of the field, agriculture. "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22:10). Laws concerning what you wear - "Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together" (Deut. 22:11). You can go on anywhere you like - just weights and measures, not two kinds of weights and measures; no two kinds of beasts working under one yoke; no two kinds of material in your garments. God does not have, in any place of His universe, room for mixture. Mixture is the hallmark of Satan's interference, and it touches this question of utter, and absolute, and unquestioned purity; worship in the beauty of holiness, no mixture, no contradiction, no confusing, no inconsistency; only one thing is in God's mind, utter, absolute, full, final, unquestioned, undivided, unreserved worship, without a doubt about it. That is the basic law of worship; and it runs through everything.

The law of marriage - no mixture. The whole law of marriage was carried right through in the life of God's people. Adultery is mixing things up. There is a whole history of that with Israel. That is the trouble, and the issue of it all was idolatry. What about Balaam mixing things up? "Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). It is the end of it. What is the sinister deep-down movement? It is touching idolatry, it has affected the whole question of worship. Two worships in God's universe, and He will not have it.

Well you see, I have said that you can pick up the Bible anywhere and you are touching eternal principle. All leads you to this one question of worship.

Take up the Tabernacle. Everything that you can touch in that Tabernacle contains the principle of what is unto God. It is so with the temple, the priesthood, the kingdom, the monarchy, the prophets - study them. Why did Saul go out, cast off by God? Mixture! The climax of Saul's doubtful career was "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?" "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen" - the best of that which belonged to the Amalekites. God will not have it, it is mixture. Out that king must go. "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do ALL MY WILL" (Acts 13:22). The principle of kingship is abandonment to the will of God. So the very king who is God's king, is a man who is more marked by worship than anyone else. Look at the Psalms. David had his faults, great faults, but the truth about David was that he was for the Lord, wholly unto the Lord. The Lord looked upon his heart, and saw that he had no reservation. He made mistakes, but it was not because he was in revolt against God and wanted something for himself; his heart was not divided over the interests of God.

Well, how much shall we touch and how much shall we leave? All the covenants, the covenant of the Sabbaths, the seventh day, the seventh year, the seven sevens of years, all bear down upon this matter of

giving God His place, bringing God into His place, and God having His rights. I will not go further with that, we have so much ground to cover.

Satan, who is termed "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4), is active all through the Bible deceiving and, by deceit, corrupting: taking sides - afflicting where his godship and worship are not acknowledged, murdering Abel; supporting wherever he finds that he is going to get what his heart is set upon. Tempting, accusing, oppressing - what is it all about? One thing only. All Satan's antagonistic activity all his work, is with one object in view, and that object is the turning of the heart of man away from God unto himself. He will even tempt you to wrong, seduce you, and when he has done it, accuse you and, in accusing you, malign God; bring a charge against God of unfaithfulness and un-love; draw away from God; put God in a wrong light. You know how he does that under duress, strain, suffering, pressure - questioning God's love and faithfulness, and so on. He is always there on the spot at a weak moment. Well, everything we are saying is bound up with this one question and issue - the worship of God. That is the Bible.

### The Relatedness of Christian Life

Let us come to the matter of Christian life. Christian life begins with what we call, comprehensively, salvation, being saved. We look at that more closely, and we speak about justification by faith, or righteousness through faith, the righteousness which is of God through faith. That spiritual truth throws us back to the Old Testament, the spotless lamb, the lamb without spot, without blemish. That is very blessed as our experience, as our joy, our salvation. But let us get deeper.

What does it mean? Well, first of all, quite simply, it means that Satan's ground has been taken away; a situation has been brought about in which Satan has no standing. The spotless Lamb has been presented, and by faith hands have been laid upon its head, and that spotlessness has been attributed to that faith as the spotlessness of the believer, and his sin has been removed. He believes that, and enters into life and salvation. It is a tremendous thing that has been done. The real basis of the salvation of the believer is that God has got His rights, and Satan has been robbed of them all.

Now lay hold of that. That is simple as a statement. God has got His rights. What are they? Absolute incorruptibility, holiness, righteousness, purity. Satan's ground, the ground of his power, authority, which is unholiness, unrighteousness, evil, sin, has been dealt with. God has provided Himself a Lamb, and in that Lamb Satan has no place, no power, God's rights are secured in the Lamb, and Satan's rights are ruled out. That is the basic fact, but we know well enough that Satan never ceases to try to make it as though it were not so.

To the end of our time, he is always seeking to bring us back on to the same ground as before, our own ground; the ground of what we are in ourselves, our own sinfulness and corruption; to have ourselves in view, and, bringing ourselves into view, to accuse our consciences, and thus to nullify the great fact of justification and righteousness through faith, to counter it; and whenever we cede him one little bit of that ground, recognize it, acknowledge it, accept it, what have we done?

We have taken God's rights from Him and given the rights back to Satan. This whole question of worship comes into the realm of suspense, there is no way through. While the question remains as to our justification by faith, our righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, Satan is in the place of power, and we are in the place of defeat, and God is being robbed. It is something much more than just a personal matter between ourselves and the Lord, between ourselves and the devil.

It is touching this ultimate question of God's rights, and all worship gets right down there. We must settle this thing, and we must not open up the matter as a matter for questioning; it must never arise as a matter of question that through faith in Jesus Christ we are justified, and righteous before God. Satan can keep his battle going in us, continual conflict between ourselves and God, while we allow a question to arise in this matter. He is getting at the ultimate thing.

When you come to the end, where this question of worship is fully and finally settled, it is this - "The Lord God the Almighty, AND THE LAMB, are the temple thereof." Worship unquestioning toward God is related to the Lamb. God gets everything through the Lamb; Satan loses everything through the Lamb.

My point is this, that salvation, in its initial sense as well as in its continuous enjoyment, justification, righteousness by faith, is bound up with this ultimate issue of God having an unquestioned place, getting all His rights. Salvation is not an end in itself, getting people saved, converted, signing cards and so on. That is small; it is good, it is right, it works, but it is so small in the light of the immense issue that is involved. You understand why souls are so hardly won, why such a battle rages around the securing of one true believer. Satan will do anything to put them in a false position, in a false faith, in an assumed conversion, and he will fight tremendously against the reality of a real, downright, central regeneration, because he stands to lose all his ground, and God to get all His. It is a big thing that is bound up with the salvation of a single soul. This is a conflict. We are drawn into it when we have a concern for men's souls. They are not just going to be handed over by asking, if they are worth anything to the Lord.

And what is true of salvation is true in the matter of sanctification, or its alternative word - consecration. What is it? It is being set apart for the Lord and it is connected with worship; consecrated, sanctified, set apart FOR THE LORD. You know quite well that in the Old Testament, worship and service always went together. It is everything for the Lord, the whole for the Lord. Why preach sanctification, why be concerned about consecration to the Lord? For this very reason, that the ultimate issue of the universe is bound up with that. The opposite of real consecration, real sanctification, is a defeated life, Satan having a part and God having a part, things belonging to one kingdom and things belonging to the other being mixed up, and God says you cannot. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). "Ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons" (I Cor. 10:21). It cannot be done. It is not just the things, it is what lies behind, the god of this world holding away from God by the things of the world. That is obvious, too obvious even to mention.

### The Relatedness of Christian Experience

Come to the matter of Christian experience; being in the hands of the Lord, under the government of the Holy Spirit; being trained, being educated; through training, discipline, spiritual education, being perfected; being brought to the place of cooperation with God. What lies behind spiritual education? Look at every fragment and phase of your spiritual education, the way the Lord deals with you, and leads you; the history that there is with God lying behind. What is the outcome of it all? Suffering, trial, perplexity, adversity, and all that which goes to make up our Christian experience - and there is so much of it - what is the outcome of it all - God has His way? Let us look at ourselves, the way we have with God, the way He has taken us through the depths; through suffering, affliction, trial and difficulty, sometimes to the point almost of despair, like Paul, despairing of life, having the sentence of death. But what is the result? If the Lord has His way, is it not that He has a larger place, and the enemy a much smaller place through it all? That is the marvel of it all. Sometimes when you are going through it, you come to a rock-bottom experience, as you think, and you feel the devil is going to gain, the Lord is losing. But when you come up out of it, the Lord

has much more ground, He has something more that He can work upon. What He has done is to get rid of a lot that was in His way. Suffering is a great purger. Christian experience is all with one object in view, where the Lord is concerned, in His dealing with us as He does. It is worship, worship in this sense, that God is coming into His own and Satan is losing ground. We have often feared that it would be just the opposite, while we were going through it, but God is faithful and it does work out to a larger measure of the Lord.

### The Relatedness of Christian Service

I must close on one final note - the matter of Christian service. We have already said that in the Old Testament service and worship were synonymous. "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Ex. 7:16). That statement, as you know, was linked up with the demand that they took their cattle for sacrifices, that they might worship the Lord. Worship was the service, and what I am concerned about is just this, that we recast our whole idea and conception of Christian work or service.

We have the idea that doing a lot of things in this way, that way, and another way, is the service of the Lord, and I want to say with strength and emphasis that all service to the Lord is determined, in its value, by how much more the Lord really gets of a place FOR HIMSELF in spiritual reality, and not how many things we do, both in number and kind. The heart, the very core of service is worship; which means that God gets an enlarged place and Satan loses ground. Judge all service by that - not by the things done, but by the spiritual issue, that there is something more coming to the Lord. I know that sounds so simple as to hardly warrant the emphasis. But get into the places of service. Evangelization; what is the object of evangelization? Ultimately, with God, the object of evangelization is that there shall be more of God in this universe and more for Him. It is not just something in itself, to get people saved. Are we quite sure that all that is being done along this line of evangelization is really and truly bringing God into the situation, that there is something there that is so much of God that Satan has to reckon with God? That is how it was in the New Testament. Strangers coming in fell down and said, God is among you! Ananias and Sapphira found that they could not deceive God; they were dealing with the living God, and it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God; God is here. That is the essence of worship, that is the nature of service. Evangelization - bringing God in and securing unto God His place and His rights. The testimony is for that; both individual and corporate testimony is for that.

Why companies? Why the churches? Because it is the New Testament order? That is not it, that is superficial. The churches are here as meaning in very reality, in spiritual intent, that God is here. God has not been put out of His universe, He is here. He can be met here; He can be known here; He is here, for or against. A local church, a corporate testimony, is essentially for that. All its activities are unto making that effective. Is mutual edification something in itself? Not at all; it is for building up a larger measure of the Lord. All its activities are for that - the increase of the Lord, the increase of God in Christ. The whole question of fellowship is that; not just to have a good, social, Christian time, a happy time together with those who are of like mind. Fellowship is a terrific thing in the spiritual realm. I use that word advisedly. Spiritual fellowship is a terrific thing amongst the unseen forces. Unto God it is a wonderful thing, a glorious thing. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"! (Psalm 133:1). But it is an object of Satan's most bitter hatred. Through the ages, one thing upon which he has concentrated has been to destroy the fellowship of the people of God, because it is in that fellowship that God is found so richly, so livingly. Fellowship is not just a nice thing that you can bring about by discussion and agreement. It is something that has to be wrought by the Holy Ghost, something so wrought by the Holy Ghost that Satan cannot undo it. It stands the test, it goes through the storms, it is a marvelous thing,

and, in the end, it is a miracle when brothers and sisters are, through all the testing and the assailing and all the working of the devil, found still together in the love of the Spirit. It is a mighty testimony to the Lord, and it is worship. There is something of worship in the real spiritual fellowship of God's people; not in what we say, but in our love, our mutual love, there is worship to God, things are coming to the Lord.

Well, there we are going to stop for the present. I trust we are able to see one thing at the back of all the details, all the things, one tremendous issue which has to govern; we have to allow it to govern, we have to make it to govern. When we meet things, we have to ask this question - Is Satan going to get something out of this, is this calculated to serve him, to yield to him what he is after? Then, by the grace of God, we will deny him that. What can the Lord get out of this, how much can the Lord get? Oh, that we might have grace always to have that as a governing thing - What can the Lord get out of this? - and take it up in the light of that question, not what we stand to gain or lose, but what does the Lord stand to gain or lose? That is the spirit of worship, and in the end, blessed be God, because of the work of the Lamb, there will be no more curse, but God Himself, the Almighty, and the Lamb, will be the temple, and there will be no question as to who is the object of the worship of this universe.

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