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"Ye Are Come"

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Notes of a Conference at Honor Oak

Reading: Rev. 21 "The holy city, new Jerusalem."

Heb. 12:22 "Ye are come... unto the heavenly Jerusalem."

1. The City - Its Essentially Spiritual Character

The City, as set forth in Rev. 21, is a whole system of Divine thoughts set forth in symbols - the presentation in consummate form of all the working of God - a *spiritual* state and position seen in a whole people constituted according to His mind. It presents features that are precious to God, i.e. features of Christ. These are foundation factors (c.f. the *precious* stones of v. 19). In its principles it is therefore not only future, but is operative now. "Ye *are* come..." The background and basis of everything that counts for God in our lives is *spiritual*.

The City is one of the several designations in the Word of God (c.f. Body, House, Temple, etc.) to describe the people of God, the Church. Each designation has its particular significance. A city is a governmental centre. (The number 12, the number of government, is much in evidence in Rev. 21). The City therefore sets forth that which governs; first in the lives of the Lord's people themselves, and then through them in the universe. Government is entirely a *spiritual* matter with God: it is spirituality that directs the course of things (c.f. 2 Thess. 2:6,7 - "one that restraineth"). Whatever the

exact significance of this, it is without doubt an essentially spiritual factor that is already governing the course of the age. Divine government is vested by predestination in the Church. Our influence is the measure of our spirituality. Are we seeking the increase of *spiritual* values?

2. The City - A Corporate Expression of Divine Features

"The tabernacle of God is with men" (v. 3) - fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "Emmanuel" - similarly in the Church, in terms of sonship; to be realised as a spiritual entity expressing God's thoughts, judgments, etc. Details of the City are the varied *expressions* of God - what He is like; e.g.:

(1) "Having the glory of God" (v. 11) - Glory can be defined as the satisfaction of God in expression. Whenever we know that God is well-pleased in us we taste glory and "are come" to the City. (How well we know that when God is not well pleased in us we taste the reverse of glory!)

(2) "Light... clear as crystal" (v. 11) - All cloudiness, duplicity, etc. gone. God is effecting this in us now by child-training, "that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:1-13). Sons are being perfected. We "are come" to the City.

(3) "Walls" and "Gates" (v. 12) - Features of discrimination and of government as to what is according to God's mind and what is not, to admit or to exclude. Spirituality alone can determine this. The spiritually minded already thus function (1 Cor. 2:15) - they "are come" to the City.

3. The City - The Bride of the Lamb

"Bride" suggests first love - undividedness of heart, joyous devotion to the Bridegroom's interests, jealousy for Him, realisation of the tremendous cost and grace wherewith He, as the Lamb, has bought her by sacrifice.

Ephesus was the climax of Paul's ministry and love is specially associated with that church. (Note the atmosphere of Acts 20:17-38, and Rev. 2:4). Ephesus departed from her first love - the love of her espousals (Jer. 2:2).

Love is the climax of the Lord's working. The City as the Bride suggests a corporate love - a company in a spirit and atmosphere of a great love for the Lord Jesus; a shared love, that finds expression in a life laid down for His interests in other lives. Is there not need for us to seek recovery of first love that we have lost?

4. The City - The Cost of Experimental Apprehension

Men who have come into the place of vision and true spiritual apprehension have invariably had a 'prison' background, literal or otherwise - c.f. Jeremiah (Jer. 32:1,2), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1), John (Rev. 1:9,10), Paul (Eph. 3:1, etc.). Such men were locked up to the consequences of the spiritual position they had taken up - c.f. Israel in the wilderness; they had left Egypt and come out to the Lord. This necessarily meant they no longer had the resources of the world available to them and they were shut up to receiving everything from Him: and how they murmured and rebelled and were sorry for themselves! - All who seek to be spiritual will know a prison in one form or other. Why? Firstly, because God is after something in them of such spiritual value (to be the governing thing in His universe), that He must shut them up to Himself for training; and secondly, because all opposing

spiritual forces will try to bring under restraint so that expression and survival are rendered impossible. But the Lord is sovereign over Satan's work and makes the prison the very place of discipline, and enlargement. Every bit of real spiritual knowledge is wrung out of suffering. We shall never come to knowledge of the Lord without that knowledge being *necessary*. - Are we wanting spiritual knowledge? Then are we ready to pay for it? (c.f. Rev. 3:18). If so, let us draw encouragement from our imprisonment.

But note: sufferings do not *necessarily* enlarge us. What is the needed condition? Like John, we must be "in the Spirit" as well as "in Patmos", This means "in the Lord" and out of ourselves. If we are wrapped up in ourselves, in the trials, etc. of our "prison", we shall see nothing and make no spiritual advance. We must let go to the Lord, in acceptance and submission. Thus shall we be spiritually enlarged. The measure of our capacity is the measure of our spirituality, not of our intellectual attainment, etc.

5. The City - Realised through Faith and Patience

Abraham ('Faith') first got a glimpse of the City (Heb. 11:10). Once you have seen it, you need intense faith to hold on for it and to accept nothing less. Realisation may look hopeless, but the hopeless and the impossible can come to pass (c.f. Gen. 18:14; Rom. 4:18).

God's City has never come into view until Man's City has been judged and dismissed - c.f. Babel, then Abraham and the City of God; Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon overthrown, then Jerusalem restored; 'Babylon' (Rev. 18), then the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21); the nominal 'Church', then the true Church. While the earthly is having its day, those who are waiting for the heavenly have need of patience. They may not see much now, but their stand will count in the afterward.

Men of spiritual vision always committed themselves by acts of faith to what they saw - c.f. Jeremiah in the purchase of the field (Jer. 32). In the day of a double imprisonment - shut up in the court of the guard in a city which was itself surrounded by the army of the enemy - he staked his reputation and his money upon a day of Divinely promised recovery.

Have we seen God's full thought for His Church? If so, have we committed ourselves to it, to wait for it in faith and patience, as Abraham did?