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## The Final Call of God

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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History is marked by a recurrent crisis which has three aspects. Whenever God has considered that the time has come for judgment, that ordeal by fire has involved these three issues. Judgment is not only penalty or punishment; it is firstly discovery and uncovering. Then it is discrimination and putting things in the category to which they belong because of what they are. Finally, it is passing sentence accordingly, and fixing destiny. This is clearly observable in all the Divine visitations in the history of nations and of the people of God. It will be fully and ultimately true of the last phase of this present world-history - disclosure, discrimination, destiny.

We have a very clear and definite instance of this represented in the fiftieth Psalm.

It has not yet been finally settled as to what part of history this Psalm belongs. Who this Asaph was is not certain. The conditions referred to in the Psalm do not very well fit into the national situation in the time of David and Solomon, when Asaph was the leader of the music. They are more like those of a later time when that glorious epoch had passed and the glory faded.

But it does not really matter; the Psalm embodies God's work of judgment at any time of visitation, and the aspects are clear.

Firstly there is the delineation of His fullest and highest thought; that which is His standard, His desire, His joy; that which is His satisfaction.

*"God... hath spoken... Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty..."*

God has an object and a pattern to which He is committed, and this is the background against which His judgment is placed. God cannot judge until He has clearly shown and revealed that which He desires and that for which He has made every provision. Judgment will ever be according to the will of God, as revealed and known; or, at least, as made available to knowledge.

In this Psalm, as in so many others, and in the Prophets, Zion is the synonym for that which embodies the full pleasure and satisfaction of God's heart and mind. In the New Testament, Zion is no longer any earthly point, but is synonymous with the Church ideally; which, again, is Christ in corporate expression (Hebrews 12:22,23).

This Divine conception and intention has been fully and gloriously revealed to a whole dispensation through the last 'Letters' of the Apostle Paul. We *have* this revelation, and it will be over against this revealed mind of God that judgment is to take place. In the sovereignty of God there is a great renewal of attention being drawn to these 'Church' Letters in our time. Perhaps never was there such a large place being given to these writings as at this present time. Upon this basis the judgment will rest, as in the case of the churches in Asia (Revelation 1-3), for it is here that the fullest and ultimate thought of God is revealed and presented. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty..." Then immediately follows - "Our God shall come... a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him".

Three things characterize this 'coming to judgment'. We take them in reverse order.

(1) "But unto the wicked God saith..." (verse 16). "Now consider this, ye that forget God" (verse 22).

Fearful things are said as pending for the 'wicked' who are described as those who 'forget God': those who have not God in their thought when so many evidences of Him abound.

(2) The middle section has to do with the judgment of formalism: the judgment to uncover and reveal what is merely outward and formal. Here is a whole system of ritual; sacrifices, altars, priests, and ceremonies. The fiery ordeal will show how much there is in the religious world, that is, of "truth in the inward parts"; whether it is a matter of the very life and character, or merely a system of rites and practices. Here is a massive structure of profession which will collapse and become ashes in the day when "Our God shall come".

(3) The gold secured and preserved.

"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (verse 5).

The last call of God, as judgment is pending, is a call to Himself. Here then is the call of God in our time.

The last movement of the people of God is to Himself: not to a movement as such; not to a teaching or interpretation of truth; not to a sect or party; not to an enterprise or mission - but *to Christ*. The final true and Divine movement is to the Lord Himself. The sheer pressure of the conditions in the gathering storm and tempest will demand a leaving of all lesser interests and objects, however good a purpose they may have served hitherto, and a moving toward the Lord Himself. 'Things' divide; the Lord unites. 'Things' must pass; the Lord abides. The time comes when all the means and accessories which the Lord has sovereignly used will cease to avail. This includes all the organized side of Christianity, and the Lord will force the issue as to how much there really is of Himself.

The basis of this phase or aspect is the 'covenant by sacrifice'. It rests upon the Cross as rooted in the very life of His people.

"GATHER... UNTO ME... BY SACRIFICE."

If this little paper could have any influence with the several thousands who receive it, this would be what we would desire, for our whole position from the beginning of our ministry has been that of the Lord above all else. It is not merely negative, as against this and that, or wrongly exclusive, as for some particular form or fellowship; but Christ in all His fulness. We may feel that devotion - more or less - to the forms or sections of Christianity is often a limitation to the Lord; but we would say: 'Make the Lord Himself your supreme object: to know Him, and to increase in His fulness; and all else will take its measure of value from that.'

So, not other than as *spiritual* movement, we would take up this Divine call.

"Gather my saints together unto me" - with the emphasis upon "together" *and* "me".