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The Mount of Vision

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Why the mountain? So often in the Bible God's movements in revelation and purpose were connected with mountains. It was so with Moses and the Law and the Pattern of the Tabernacle. It was so with Elijah at Carmel and Horeb: with David and the Temple site. It was so with Christ and His great kingdom discourse, His transfiguration, etc. And it was so with John and the vision of the New Jerusalem. These are but a few of the mountain-epochs in the Scriptures. What is its significance? for surely it is not just coincidence.

Does it not represent elevation above and ascendancy over the earth and its influences. It involves detachment (in spirit), heaven countering earth, gravity overcome, exercise - deliberate and determined. In a word, it points to another realm and order, a "kingdom of the heavens", to that which is not of this creation. There *is* a place of heavenly vision and revelation, and it has to be taken with the "loins of the mind" girded and with steadfast outreach to God.

The Letter to the Ephesians is the counterpart of Exodus 24-25. There the position is "in the heavenlies". The object is "that ye may know", the issue is "the eternal purpose". These three things correspond to a position secured, a vision given, an intention grasped and established.

Such a place *must* be found in the life of the individual believer and in that of the Church. Lose your 'mountain' apart with the Lord and you lose your vision and governing purpose, and become bound by mere happenings and activities on the earth. The earth is a very small place compared with the

heavens! But remember that such a position of being "seated together with Christ" in the heavenlies is only by way of the Altar or Cross. In Exodus 24:4-6 we see the altar and its values - the blood governing the ascension of the mount. This inclusively establishes the position that all is of and for the Lord.

The whole movement begins with *worship*, verse 1, and worship means that there is nothing of man, but all is of the Lord, and back to Him. It results in all that eventuates being wholly out from God. In this case (Exodus 25) it was the tabernacle.

Now, the majority of evangelical Christians believe that the Tabernacle was a type of Christ, but there are several defects and weaknesses in this belief. For many it is a beautiful and fascinating typology, full of interest and wonderful truths. Then, so often, only the redemptive aspects are taken up: those factors or features which have to do with redemption, e.g. atonement, justification, sanctification, access, etc. Then again, it has supported an earthly and objective system of outward 'orders', rituals, rites, vestments, ordinances, sacraments, and 'offices'. All this so often means the missing of the basic and supreme meaning of this representation. It resolves itself into Christian 'truth', order and practice as the basis of things, and this - to say the least - is inadequate, it may be harmful. What is really in God's mind and eye is not a *thing*, not a Tabernacle, a system, and not even a 'pattern'. The all-governing matter with God is *a revelation of God in Christ to the heart by the Holy Spirit, a revelation of Jesus Christ*.

The Tabernacle is only meant to be a mirror of Christ. So Paul speaks of "*beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord*"; and, in the same context, "*God... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*".

It is not a matter of our seeing Christian truth, but of seeing Christ by revelation of the Spirit. See Christ *now* first, not the Tabernacle first and then Christ. We live in the day of the full revelation, not of typical foreshadowings. There is so much failure to recognize that the Tabernacle is meant to lead to a recognition of the oneness of Christ and His Church, a corporate representation of Christ. With the majority of Christians the corporate almost goes for nothing as to its practical values. An immense amount is done in evangelism but the results are incommensurate both in measure and calibre. A great percentage of those moved to a 'decision' in an evangelistic effort are subsequently, not only missing but, less approachable than before. The spiritual measure of the majority even years afterward is very meagre, they just become 'church-goers'. The impact of 'the Church' upon the world is exceedingly disappointing. We have no hesitation in saying that all this is largely, if not mainly, due to a failure to see the difference between a congregation, a 'meeting', a location of a number of unit-Christians, on the one side, and a living corporate organism on the other. The composite and the organic are two different things. One is formed from the outside, the other is formed from within.

There is very great power bound up with such a vision. What no other force on earth could have done was done in a moment when Paul saw Christ and caught what He signified. It completely emancipated him from tradition, earthly systems of religion, and all those things which by inheritance, training, and belief had been his very life - "the things", said he, "which were gain to me". When we want to explain Paul, and account for his influence through twenty centuries, we have to go to his "vision". He had seen Christ, and in seeing Christ had come to see the meaning and nature of the Church as His Body. Such a vision roused hell against him, and provoked the utmost prejudice, ostracism, and conflict. Had the vision not been so tremendously real he would long since

have compromised and have taken a less costly line. But he "was not disobedient", and so has become the answer to every crisis in the Church's history.

The vision is for all who mean business with God. But we shall truly be tested as to whether we do. The vision is up there where all the gravity of indecision, passivity, compromise, indifference, cowardice, expediency, policy, unbelief, feeble-mindedness, etc. has been overcome and subjected to "the on high calling". There are no 'funiculars' or 'chair-lifts' to those altitudes, it is a challenge, and often a lonely business.

But to move for ever after in the power and influence of that 'open heaven' is to meet the greatest and deepest need of the Lord's people in relation to their high destiny.

The Christianity of numerous Christians is not big enough. If they are not frequently provided with strong stimulants in the form of conventions, 'revival' meetings, (and more than ninety percent of the people who attend big gospel campaigns are Christians) 'rallies', etc., they drop into, or go on in, a very lifeless and limited sort of way. Now all this is a false mountain life. So often, after some special 'rally' or 'event', the time is referred to as having 'been on the mountain' and now having to come 'down into the valley'.

While there are real values in the gathering of the Lord's people from far and near, such occasions should not be *the* life of such. Paul was in prison when he wrote most about the heavenlies. Special occasions can give an artificial sense of life and 'vision', which fades when these times pass, so that 'we live for the next' occasion. Paul's "heavenly vision" kept him going through all the dark, drab, and sordid experiences which were associated with his ministry. There is something very much more than being saved and much engaged in 'Christian work'. Without this great plus the essential motive and impetus is lacking, and there is little or no personal spiritual enlargement. This extra is "heavenly vision". It was the inspiration of Peter, Paul, John, Stephen, and of many others.

How could the Prophets have fulfilled their sorry, and in some senses, tragic and hopeless mission but for the dynamic of a God-given vision? 'But', you say, 'they were Prophets and Apostles. We are just ordinary people!'. The answer is that the New Testament almost as a whole was given by the Holy Spirit to give and to keep before the whole Church this tremendous objective of the "eternal purpose", and Paul, exhausting all superlatives of language in this very connection, falls to prayer for "all saints" thus:

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, (note the designation - the Father of GLORY) may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints", etc..