

Sion

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 1 – A People Expressing the Lord’s Whole Desire

Chapter 2 – God’s Name in Sion

Chapter 3 – Sion’s Light

Chapter 4 – Sion’s Wealth

Chapter 5 – Sion’s Unity and Fellowship

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Chapter 1 – A People Expressing the Lord’s Whole Desire

Reading: Psalm 132.

We will continue our contemplation of Sion. We know now what Sion stands for. We will just proceed to interpret some more features of Sion, some of those things which bring us into a very real, living and active and responsible relationship with Sion, with the Lord in Sion.

When we read passages such as those that we have just read and Psalm 48, in all these references, both in the psalms and in the prophets, to Sion, there is one thing which becomes very clear. It is a feature which embraces almost everything else, and which stands as governing the whole position. We may call it the supreme element in relationship to Sion. It is that the Lord is the ultimate feature in Sion. I use the word ‘ultimate’ there not as being in the sense of the end of course, but as being behind everything else when you have worked your way back of everything which lies nearer the surface. There may be a heap of things which meet you first, but when you have got right through all this you come to the Lord, you reach the Lord; the Lord is the feature of Sion. You must not allow the word ‘Sion’ to give you such mental pictures as to take away that which we are after.

We have to be helped by the Word in these things and the Old Testament does help us to the New Testament things. When we speak of Sion, it means that people which represent His full intention and desire, and when you get behind everything else in relation to that people, whatever it is that may circle round and meet you on the outward side, you find the Lord. The Lord is the ultimate feature in relation to that people expressing Him in that fuller way. As we read all these passages, the one thing behind all else is the Lord. You may have many forces playing on Sion, many elements, many conflicting things, many things which are real and many things which are not real, imaginary and seeming. But the one fact that stands behind is that Sion is no mere idea or hypothesis; it is bound up with God, and God is bound up with Sion. And when you have cleared up everything that can be cleared up, you come to God in relation to a people expressing His mind in fullness — you find that you are dealing with God.

As the nations looked upon Jerusalem and many of them thought that Jerusalem stood perhaps as any other great city and could be dealt with as other cities, and Jerusalem could be taken and spoilt. While things were in a right relationship with the Lord, and it had its heart open unto the Lord, Jerusalem could not be besieged and taken as other cities, Jerusalem could not be destroyed as other cities had been destroyed. They found that they were up against another feature which was more than Jerusalem, it was the Lord. God is bound up with Sion and when everything else has been taken into account then you have to meet the Lord in Sion.

Now for us, we should hope that we belong to Sion, believe that we do belong, although we are only fragments of Sion. This is not of man or man-made, what man has tried to bring about, to maintain. Sion stands for God’s full thought; that thought has come out from God. The very idea of Sion was a divine idea before Sion ever was, and the very existence of Sion can only be accounted for of God. “*God is in her, she shall not be moved.*” You see what that may mean to us. Those of us who have been shown Sion in a spiritual way, to whom God has made clear His full purpose, are much burdened about it, but there is a place to which we must come. While having a responsibility, a ministry, an interest in relationship to Sion, all a right kind of ministry, and while having a share in the Lord’s concern and having a heart burden, there is nevertheless alongside of that a

rest to which we should come in the certain assurance that God is bound up with that. It is God's affair initially and finally. That is a tremendous thing if we could really grasp it. The Lord does not need us to coerce Him into this thing, but what He does want is for us to stand in with Him in that which He is after. The Lord is bound up with it, God is tremendously concerned about it. Everything seems to contradict the fact that God is concerned about it. There are many things which would seem to give the lie to such a statement. The evidences of the Lord in the matter are so few, the manifestations of God in the matter of the whole thing are so hard to find, and there seem to be no expressions of the fact that God is in the midst and that He is concerned. It is in this realm that we so often find our greatest difficulties. It may seem that the Lord is not working on a big scale for such a great thing. It is just there that we look for real help. Our lives have come out at such a great cost from mere generalities in Christian activity and interest, because we have seen something which seems to be God's objective. And we have come to the place where we would say that that is not getting far enough and that God wants something more than the mere general. We would really stake our lives upon it; it is not our enterprise but it is God's predominant thing. Then we come up against things which seem to say: What is the Lord doing? How is the Lord going to work to realise this? We do not seem to have the divine proofs that would seem to justify such a costliness of position. Now this is only one other way in which we fall back upon this initial thing.

God is the ultimate factor in Sion. You find God behind everything even when every realm of sense has been exhausted. The principle which governs this ultimate relationship of God in Sion is the principle of faith. This principle governs everything. Of course there is a lot of background in the Word for saying that. It is difficult to pick any one thing out to illustrate it. A call of God leads often to a breakdown of faith where one would seek to turn to something more sentient.

Abraham, for instance, was called to God's uttermost. But everything seemed to be a contradiction to common sense, and a positive denial to that which God had promised. He found the land full of idolatry and wickedness and saw no way of conquering it as God had promised. It was a great test of faith and he failed and turned aside into Egypt. But Egypt was not in the divine intention, and Canaan was, although it seemed entirely contrary to all sense and reason. So he had to go back to the place where God stands against all that which is wrong. You see it is all a matter of faith when God leads into that which is nearest His heart, and even if everything seems to say that it is an impossible undertaking and only works out in just the opposite way, you are not helpless. You can save your face in Egypt. You can save your reputation in Egypt, you can satisfy your perfectly logical desire to see something happen. But it is Egypt and God is not there; it is not God's place. The same thing, of course, was true in Israel. God never called Israel to go half way through the wilderness to the land and to die there. No sooner were they through the Jordan than in their hearts they turned back to Egypt. It seemed a helpless undertaking. It was just a case of working their way through all that touches the senses, all that is lying on the surface, until they found God. They found Him just in the place where he had shown himself in the beginning. Faith has to work through everything. It brings you to the very finest issue.

What is divine leading? In its deepest meaning it is being led of the Lord, not in a great demonstration on the outside, voices telling you what you should do, the clearest directions. The deepest divine leading is in that still small voice in which God speaks to the spirit. Our senses do not register this still small voice, and so if we go on, waiting for some outward demonstration and not listening to the still small voice within, we find ourselves in the midst of problems, difficulties and perhaps in a mess. Then we have to reflect, to work through all that is on the surface, and get through to God at the back of things. But it all amounts to faith. It means that we have got to trust God, and that represents the utter and true thing for God. God is the ultimate factor reached by faith, I have only said this in order to emphasise the need of faith. I have proved that in order to reach the Lord you have to brush aside all human reasonings, the evidences which lie on

the surface, all the contradictions. The ultimate thing is God related to a full purpose. There are layers and layers of things which have to be worked through. Because you are working against yourself and human ways and judgements and what seems a proof that the opposite is the right thing. Faith, proved and tested, is a principle of Sion. Faith, a proved faith and a tested faith, is one of the principles of Sion, and a faith in the realm where a true apprehension of God's purpose is found although everything seems to contradict it. If you were to listen to and be influenced by things, you would go into Egypt. A faith tested out and proved is an essential feature of Sion, a people representing God's full thought.

Abraham is the first man who moves in relation to the proved and tested faith. Everything told him that he had made a mistake. Every natural door was closed. All the evidence is against you; it seems impossible that God can accomplish His end. Well, are you going to work your way through to God? You may be simply working against all good sense and good judgement, all that you would expect. But it is necessary to just hang upon God. Every alternative may be gone and it is all just hopeless from the natural standpoint; there is no prospect. But we have to work through all that realm of things and get to God.

This is Sion. This is the constitution of Sion, and of all those who overcome. They are utterly wrecked on God. He is their only and ultimate. Sion ever stands over against Egypt. Sion has no strength or resource but God.

It seems to me that the history of Sion is the history of God allowing her to be assailed by every force possible to prove and test her. It would have been a poor lookout for Sion if the Lord had not been in the midst of her. Look at the multitudes of Sennacherib! With the Lord there all these forces melted away like snow. Those who go all the way with the Lord are allowed to encounter things which the average Christian never meets — principalities and powers. The others only know about the problems of gambling and drink, but those who go right on with the Lord know what it is to come into contact with the mighty spiritual forces — and the Lord allows it. But God comes and works deliverance and blessing in spite of our little faith.

Sion represents a vessel, an instrument, a people expressing the Lord's whole desire. God himself is bound up with it. It is God's peculiar treasure. Israel was chosen as such for the Lord; as a whole it failed. But the Lord did not abandon His purpose and a little company eventually proved to be after His desire. He Himself is the ultimate feature of the company. It does seem that the Lord does so little in securing this company, but he is dead-set on getting this company for himself, in spite of the little that we may see. He must safeguard His choicest things from publicity. Are we prepared to go through against pressures, assailings and difficulties, to God in the midst of Sion. It means working through all that comes in the realm of sense to God.

Chapter 2 – God’s Name in Sion

Reading: Psalm 102.

No doubt you notice in the Psalm, references to Sion, and you were probably impressed with the main feature of the whole Psalm. On the one hand there is the weakness of human life. Here is a man who is very definitely up against the shortness and transience of human life, and yet he desires to live. Look at it in itself; life is not much. *“It is consumed like smoke.”* And yet he desires to live; over against this rather poor outlook he desires to live and the object for which he desires to live is Sion. He is so concerned for Sion, that Sion gives him a purpose in life. Sion gives meaning and character to life and it is seen in itself to be something of very much glory. It takes on glory by reason of its purpose. This psalm resolves itself into this: that this man wants to live for Sion alone. Otherwise there is not much. This may form our further meditation of the features of Sion.

Note Psalm 102:21: *“To declare the Name of the Lord in Sion, and His praise in Jerusalem”*. So that we are going to meditate for a little while on the Lord’s Name in Sion. We might, perhaps, just remind ourselves of that fragment in Rev. 3:12: *“He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name”*. We want to grasp the significance of attaching a name to a thing. Now when you come to think of it, it is not necessary to go very far to see why a name is put upon a thing. Take the ordinary things that we have to do and they bear a name. In every department of life, no matter what it is, there is a name attached to things, and when you ask why the name is put there, why is not everything anonymous? Well, the answer is this: man has made the certain thing his life work, he has put his best resources of brain, heart, soul and strength into that thing, and when it is produced it is the expression of the best that that man can do. It is the embodiment of his very best work, and when he has done it he gives it his name for it really expresses his own life. The name stands for thorough good workmanship and exhaustive work. The name put on the thing represents the product of man’s ingenuity and application. It is his very best, and the name means that, we say: “If only you get a so-and-so thing we have got *the thing*” (it may be the name of the man), “You can count on that!” That name represents something. Now you see that it is equally true in the Word of God, that when the Lord puts His name anywhere or on anything or anyone, it means that that thing represents the result of His deepest thought and His most carefully applied attention. It is the most ripe expression of what He can do. That is Sion. You notice that fragment: *“I will write upon him the name of My God”*. That means that that overcomer, be it an individual or collectively, is the full expression of the best God can do. God has put His best into it and it stands for His name. *“I will write upon him the name of my God”*, that is God’s work fully accomplished. *“The name of the City of My God”* — that is the representation of the work of the Lord; “my own new name”, that is the result of His intercessory and mediatorial work, His work by the cross and in heaven. ‘My name carries all the values of my work.’

Now if you want more evidence, let us look at it from the other angle. Look at it from the side of man. Turn to Gen. 11:4: *“Let us make us a name ... Let us build a city. Let us make us a tower, let us make us a name ...”*. That city and that tower was going to represent the collective energy, resources and ingenuity of this people. They were going to put these into that thing and use their resources to build something which would reach unto the heavens and when it was done, it would be the embodiment of all that they could possibly do, of the resources of mind and heart and will. They would give it the name of Babylon. Babylon stands over against Sion as representing the full, ripe

expression of human energy for human glory. Just as man sought to make him a name by means of Babylon, so has God sought to make Himself a name by Sion, if you like to put it that way. His Name must be in Sion. You see what Sion represents then. It is the expression of satisfaction on the part of the One who has made it, so that He puts His name upon it. No one would run the risk of putting his name upon something with which he was not satisfied. If he put his name on something false it would only ruin him. So that when a man puts his name upon a thing it signifies that he is satisfied with it. There is an active and practical side. It is connected with the work done. When the Lord does something, He works His work into it, and then crowns it with His name, so that it does represent that which He has done and with which he is satisfied. Revelation 3:12 goes right on to the end. These passages mark the contrast between that which is the work of man and that which is the work of the Lord. The sphere of Christian activity has become the happy hunting ground of personal glory. Personal glory and honour has intruded into Christian work, or rather into the work of the Lord. But we need not stay with this; we want to see the deeper implications of this to our own hearts.

Here in the building of the city and the tower we see that the whole trend of things was to draw to self for self-gratification and self-satisfaction. That is what Babylon means: "*Let us make us a name*", and draw everything to self. Sion stands in perfect contrast. Sion seeks everything for the Lord. For the name of the Lord put upon it means the Lord's satisfaction with the work done. Then Sion draws everything to the Lord for His satisfaction, just as Babylon represents everything of self for self-satisfaction. It is a matter of everything being for the Lord. It is a very searching thought for the Lord's people, for you and I, and it will constantly come back to us and we shall be tested on this question of holding all for the Lord or all for ourselves. It will touch everything that we have, it will bring us to that position reached by the Psalmist in Psalm 102. What is the value of life? What is it that gives life its meaning, and its purpose? Is it Sion? In other words, is it the Lord? It is easy to say that we really want to be utterly out for the Lord. We should all say that we wanted that. Yes, but you and I are very blind, we do not know what we mean. Everything in our lives must meet that question. Is it for the Lord? Will you hold that for the Lord or for yourself? Even our relationships must be for the Lord — our ordinary human relationships, our family relationships and others. It is progressive; it is not all done in a moment. It may be right on to the end of our lives that we must face this question. The same thing may happen in the Lord's work. We may get bound up in a certain work for the Lord which brings a certain amount of gratification. The thing that must hold us is Sion. It must hold us because it is all of the Lord. It is so different from Babylon. "*Let us make us a name.*" They were saying in effect: 'We are going to be overcomers.' Well that is trying to be overcomers in your own strength. Sion's overcomers are those who overcome the Babylonish overcomers and get through to heaven. In ourselves we have nothing and can do nothing; all is in the Lord and through the Lord. We have chosen to have no life apart from the Lord. When that overcomer company gets through to heaven all principalities and powers will know that it is of the Lord.

Now let us look at it from the other side of the issue. Babylon represents the holding of all things for ourselves, not being prepared to let go whatever it is, for the Lord, the relationship, the home, whatever it is that we are holding for ourselves. That is the spirit of Babylon. Now let us see what is the issue. In Genesis 11 the issue is confusion and shame. The world today knows all about Babylon. The trouble in the world today results from the spirit of Babylon. It is always that way. The spirit of Babylon will bring about confusion and shame. Sion, which is the just the opposite, represents everything for the Lord. The result of Sion is glory, not shame. It is blessed fellowship as over against confusion. I take again the instance cited. A fellowship in a realm which was altogether new, a new kind of fellowship. These relationships were transferred from earth to heaven. It was not loss, but glory. It would have been shame but it became glory and fellowship. Now it is that mutuality which stands so definitely over against Babylon. Babylon is the outworking of limitation. Get through to Sion and you get out into the

universal. Then look at the weakness showed in Babylon, They meant to have strength; they were saying that unity is strength. "*Lest we be scattered*". It all proved weakness when the Lord came down and confounded them, and their united strength broke down and they were scattered and in terrible weakness. The strength of the Lord is in Sion and it is mighty and powerful. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion which cannot be moved and abides for ever. The strength of Sion is that we have everything for the Lord. "*Men shall declare the name of the Lord (Jehovah) in Sion*". "*I will write My name ...*" (Rev. 3:12). Here is something that is wholly My own, the expression of Myself. The result of My cross at work. My Name is on it. No one will find anything to destroy My reputation when I really put My Name upon a thing.

The Lord is working upon it to get rid of the Babylonish remains by the power of the cross. This power gets rid of Babylon, which is nature. It is to destroy Babylon and build Sion. Sion is being built into us; it expresses the Lord's work.

Chapter 3 – Sion’s Light

Reading: Isaiah 60.

We will go on in our contemplation of Sion. We have been seeing that while Sion and Jerusalem are interchangeable terms applied to the same thing, Sion stands rather to represent an ideal of God. It is the summing up in a full and complete way of all God’s thoughts and desires for His people. Carried into the New Testament and into our own time, the difference between Sion and Jerusalem, as seen in the Old Testament is simply a difference between what is general and what is specific, what is within and what is nominal in character among the Lord’s people. What is failing to move right on to all that is in His heart, that is Jerusalem. But Sion represents that company of the Lord’s people who really are moving on with the Lord into His greater fullness and coming to express for Him His own ideal, the embodiment and expression of His deepest and richest thoughts for His people. We are brought to see this distinction quite clearly between the Lord’s people, so it is Sion, spiritually, which is before us at this time. That is what the Lord does really seek to have as a full expression of Himself. We have been seeing some of the features of Sion.

Now we are going to consider for a little while Sion’s light. Notice that in Isaiah 60:14 Sion occupies a central place. Round that you have:

“Arise shine ...” (60:3).

“The nations shall come to thy light ...” (60:3).

“The Lord shall be unto thee light ...” (60:19).

“The Lord shall be your everlasting light ...” (60:20).

“Jesus Christ the faithful witness ...” (Rev. 1:5).

“Seven golden candlesticks ...” (Rev. 1:12).

“The mystery of the golden lampstands ...” (Rev. 1:20).

“The eyes of your heart enlightened ...” (Eph. 1:18).

You see that these fragments, and many more which could be added, all touch upon the light of the Lord’s people as He would have it. They lead us to this initial, foundational and quite comprehensive conclusion, that the Lord’s thought for Sion is that she may be enlightened. The Lord’s thought for His own true people is that they may be an enlightened people. God is light. Christ is light. The Holy Spirit is light, the Spirit of revelation. God does all His work in and by light; God never performs His work in the darkness. It may not always appear to us that He is working in the light, but He is. There is no darkness at all with him and it does not matter where you find God entering in a specific activity; He does it in light. Let us have light! He takes up His activity, by first of all getting things out into the light, in the new creation. His first activity is to bring light, he fulfils all the work of creation in light. He uses light as a means. God is going to develop something and He uses light as a means to the development. If you and I are going in any way to make increase it will be by knowledge of the Lord, and that means by some fresh light. If all growth, all development, increase and progress is going to be of God, the instrument will be light.

We know, of course, that life and light go together with God, but at the moment we are occupied only with the one side. We have dealt with life and we need to know that these two things go together; it is life and light. He will use light in His work and He works in the light. Further, it is a discovery of what the Lord is that makes progress possible. It is the light of what He is Himself. The instrument of the Lord is light. The Lord makes light. That means that He works against every other condition, God makes light and Satan makes darkness. Bringing that down to simple and spiritual application, it means this.

Spiritual intelligence and understanding are essential to effectiveness. You see light as an energetic thing; it is an active thing. You may have somewhere in you a question, is it true that those who have the greatest amount of light are the most effective? The possibility is that they live on the light of someone else, and yet have not got it themselves. They have not got it from the Lord but try to keep going the light of someone else; they have got the forms of that light as given in certain articles of faith, but that is not light. Real light is a form of energy. You may hear what I am saying and have it second-hand and yet it may not come to you as real light.

There is a lack of the essential energy in such people and they misrepresent the light and the truth, but when the Lord is our light then Sion is a tremendously effective thing. When we really have got spiritual intelligence and spiritual understanding, it is tremendously effective. It is a power and has such force as to set in motion other forces. You can tell whether people have spiritual light by the registration of their testimony upon spiritual forces.

We take our classic example in Daniel. Daniel, with his windows wide open, and the Lord gives him wonderful light. Daniel had light, revelation, and could 'make known', and then you see that great world spiritual forces were set in a state of activity. It is registered above in a spiritual realm. With Paul, who may be called an illustration of this, we find a tremendous antagonism of the devil against that vessel, simply because of the light that that vessel has got. It works both ways, that an illumined vessel makes an impact in the spiritual realm and the spiritual realm rises up against an illumined vessel to quench the light.

In the first chapters of the book of Revelation, the Lord is shown as the faithful witness. That corresponds to the seven golden lampstands and in the majority of cases the lampstands have failed, but the Lord moves into the midst of them and challenges them as to their light. The lampstand is to be a light and not an ornament; it is a testimony. It is all a question of faithfulness. Now the Lord as the faithful witness steps into the centre, as a witness of light. You see it is effectiveness. It is effectiveness of testimony through spiritual illumination. The Lord challenges the light. Spiritual intelligence and understanding are necessary to effectiveness. Spiritual power corresponds to spiritual light, and spiritual progress is in proportion to light. We must have a fuller apprehension to go on. No one makes spiritual progress except on the ground that they get more knowledge of the Lord — and more light means spiritual progress. It is not so with so many multitudes of the children of God who are still only spiritual infants. They have not grown because they are not getting a progressive revelation of the Lord. They are only fed on children's food. A full ministry in light must mean spiritual growth. Progress is bound up with spiritual light, intelligence, understanding. Now what is true in the realm of spiritual progress is also true in the ministry which has to be fulfilled. A ministry is fulfilled through light.

You see in Isaiah 60 that it has not been fulfilled literally for Israel yet. One day there will be a day which corresponds literally to this chapter. But certainly it is true that that day should have a spiritual fulfilment in Sion spiritually. Perhaps the Lord would fulfil it now, and surely this is the desire of our hearts. You see the thing that is said here in the presence of Sion's light: "*The nations shall come to thy light.*" I think we may quite rightly and properly ask the question if we do not positively answer it, and we might go a long way in that direction. Is it not true that the Lord's people all over the world are coming up against the need of having more light! Are they not coming to be increasingly up against situations, problems in the work of God, and they are right up against things. The only thing that is going to save them and their life ministry is that they get some illumination. I think we can see that there is a movement in that direction. This means that the Lord's people are simply being forced to stand still in their work and there is no progress. It is being arrested and the whole thing is faced with a big question: How? — in relation to effectiveness and ministry in present state of things.

Growth may be slow but it is sure. It is 'the mills of God which grind slowly but exceeding small'. But He is, it seems to me, steadily facing His people up with this new necessity. They are losing faith and hope and vision. Some are settling down in a pathetic despair, just carrying on. Others of them resort to other methods to get results. But the really honest people seek God's solution. To simply settle down to things makes the life of faith a disappointing one. Somehow we need a new vision. we need to be brought to meet the situation in a new way. This is truly growing. Wherever you go you meet this question. Sometimes strong assurances are met but when you begin to sound things you find that is only a front. When you get beyond that, you see they have got questions. What is the thing that is going to meet the need? It is spiritual understanding, some more light. This is the explanation of their coming from far and near in Isaiah 60; it is all for light. "*They shall come to Thy light.*" "*The Lord shall be thy light.*" You have something more than a natural explanation. Spiritual light means that there is a need. You will be pressed to come to the light. It takes a long time because there is a lot to be got over. With light everything runs in such direct contrast with tradition. It upsets quite a deal that is of nature. People have got to get over their suspicions, their pedigrees, their notions and nothing will do that but a real crisis, and real lack of food. A starving man is not particular over which vessel he can get food out of. He may be over-particular when he has plenty, but when he is starving it is another matter.

The Lord may have to bring His people there. Where unless they get some fuller revelation they will go out. It may be that that is what he is doing now, quietly, more than we know. It is only when we get quietly apart with people that we discover the secrets of their hearts.

It does seem very clear that if the Lord can have a vessel in which he can be the light in a full way, that vessel will be His solution. This vessel will be His means of solving many of the problems in the world. If we are willing to pay the price for spiritual illumination, we shall not lack ministry. We shall not have to make ministry; it will grow. The Lord is watching and He will so work that those who are honest with Him will be forced to come to the place where there is light. They will come in spite of themselves, and of others. "*Because of thy light.*" It is not because of *you*. They may still think poorly of the vessel, but they will get what is in the vessel. It will never be a question of work and workers; those who have the light are bound to come into their place of ministry in the Lord. Light is the feature of the testimony; the clash is between darkness and light. It is not always what men recognise as darkness because often what men call light is darkness. For instance, modernism — Is that light? It is darkness from a spiritual standpoint. While on the other hand, what you and I might call darkness, the natural state of man, is God's opportunity. I think that the Ethiopian represents spiritual darkness of a natural kind. "*Do you understand what you read?*" How can I? That is the kind of darkness that is God's opportunity.

The way to light is the way of recognising the need of it and being open to receive it. Sion is a city of light.

Chapter 4 – Sion’s Wealth

Reading: Isa. 45:1-17; 60:5,6,9,11,17; Rev. 2:9; 3:18; Rom. 9:23,11:12,33; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:8,16,18; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27.

We will continue in our meditation of the Lord’s thoughts concerning Sion. Now we are going to contemplate Sion’s wealth. The mentioned Scripture references are enough to form some foundation for a word on the wealth of Sion. In the previous chapter we started with the simple statement that the Lord’s desire for Sion is that it should be a place of light. In this connection we can start today with the fact that the Lord’s desire for Sion is wealth. You will probably read the psalms in future with a new light on the word ‘Sion’, Sion will have taken on some new meaning and whenever you come upon the word, and you will be surprised how often you do come upon it, you will always look to see what the connection is, and you will see that it is connected with some features of the Lord’s thought, very often along the line of spiritual wealth.

Now in these passages which we have covered together there are two kinds of riches represented. The passages are really divided into two classes. On the one side there are what we may call the riches of the Lord, and on the other side the riches of the nations. These passages which speak of His riches, the riches which are in Him, the riches of His grace, the riches of His wisdom and knowledge and glory — these are the Lord’s riches. Then the others such as the wealth of the nations, the abundance of the sea, we want to consider these and see their representative characteristics. But first of all we must more clearly bring into view the meaning of Sion itself. Sion is Christ in full expression. It does not do to speak of Sion only as a people. Sion is a peculiar people, a peculiar treasure, but that which makes Sion what it is, is Christ in the midst. He gives character to Sion and Sion takes its character from Him (Col. 1:27). The riches are connected with “*Christ in you*”. Let us be quite clear that we want to put a people, a church, in the place of Christ himself. The church is because of Christ, and is not without Christ, and what the church is depends entirely upon the place and measure occupied by Christ. If this is so for the church, it is to be a full and complete testimony; it demands a full and complete approximation to Christ. Christ must be in full expression if the church is to justify its existence according to the thought of God. The church is always represented in the Scriptures as a perfect thing. In Ephesians you notice that the church is represented there in a perfect way. That is from the divine standpoint. God never allows incompleteness. It must come to a full expression of that thought, which is Christ. And He will have that full expression in Sion. Sion will be His peculiar treasure. Sion is Christ related in full expression to a people. Now if that is so, and Christ in full expression is so closely related to riches, then taking the first of the two categories of riches, it means that the riches of Sion are there in Sion, in process of apprehension and appropriation. That may be too big to grasp in one statement. Of course all the riches of Christ are not appropriated or apprehended at once, but they are all there in Sion.

We know that in Christ we have got the wealth. We do not know all that that means, we do know that in having him we have tremendous possessions. It is a mighty fact that we are going to know in a progressive way what we have got in Christ. There is a tremendous realm that is open to us, and if we go on we are going to make tremendous discoveries. There is always much more in front than behind. Sion is the place of riches, and they are there to be appropriated and apprehended, Turn to Philippians 4:19. “In Christ Jesus” always means that it is for us. “*He who spared not His own Son, shall He not freely give us all things?*” It is as if the Lord says, I have put in that house all my riches and now I invite you to live there. All the time you will be making fresh discoveries as to that wealth, but the moment you step outside you will leave it behind. You must live in that house by faith. Christ is that house. Anyone in Him will go on discovering the riches. We who live in Christ are moving about in the realm of His fullness. All our needs are met by the riches which God put into him.

We discover progressively what the riches are. The riches of His grace. *"My grace is sufficient for you"*. It is in Christ. How marvellous is the longsuffering of God. It is all of grace; all His dealings with us are in grace. Without Him we have no strength, no abilities, no merit, it is all by His grace. That grace is dealing with us to get us through to glory.

Then there are the riches of His wisdom and His knowledge. Now this carries things on beyond grace. Grace is something which comes in because sin abounds, and is the result of a sinful state. The riches of His wisdom go behind grace into the eternal counsels of God. Look at wisdom in Ephesians and you will see that it relates to the counsels of God in all eternity. Everything is being worked according to the eternal counsels. God is governed in His dealings with us in grace by the wisdom that relates to the eternal purposes. The cunning and cruel works of the devil are overruled by these counsels and turn out for the furtherance of God's will. Look at the cross itself. God never intended the cross as a part of His scheme in the first place. The cross became a necessity. It is the devil's work, but Christ crucified has become the wisdom of God. The devil's worst work in bringing about that cross was overruled by the wisdom of God.

Take the rod of Moses. The rod is the symbol of authority, and the serpent is the symbol of evil. Moses was commanded to take it up by its tail. In the name of the Lord we are to come after him and not always prevent and forestall him. The devil opens up the way to show the divine power which will finally outwit him.

Then there are the riches of the full assurance of understanding. This represents influence. It is a very rich place. It represents power in the spiritual realm. You know that the Lord has taught you to know Him. You have got some measure of insight in the Lord's ways. It brings you into the strong place. The Lord is seeking to have that which is true of Himself as true in us. The majority of the Lord's people are living in the suburbs. They have never moved for years. "Let us go on". Those who live in Sion know something of the riches of the Lord and are going on to know more.

Then there is the matter of the wealth of the nations being brought into Sion. There are spiritual factors governing this interpretation. The wealth of the nations may be brought into the historic Sion. The wealth of the nations will be brought into the heavenly Jerusalem. In Revelation we see some of the spiritual fulfilments. There is the spiritual counterpart. And I think the Lord would have it more so now. The Lord would have His people, represented by Sion, now bringing in the wealth of the nations. He would gather in the full inheritance from the nations: the wealth, resources and strength of the nations. I think it just means that the Lord will gather into the full vessel of His testimony, His Sion, His own inheritance (Eph. 1:18). The riches He is going to get out of the saints. Now look into the nations, the Lord takes a people out of the nations for Himself. He will seek to constitute for Himself a people containing spiritual values. He will bring those spiritual values to form for Him a vessel of expression. Sion will not only receive riches but will also bring riches to the Lord. He has an inheritance in them. So many of the Lord's people are only living for what they can get from Him, and they do not trouble about what they can be to Him. He seeks a people who will bring to him an inheritance. He seeks those who are living unto the Lord's satisfaction. I doubt whether it is possible to really apprehend the Lord's riches without bringing something back to Him. Sion has the portion of the Lord and Sion gives a portion to the Lord. The Lord's portion is His people! Sion is built by people of spiritual wealth and means, and those who want to be for the Lord come from the nations. The spiritual wealth of some draws out the others to the Lord. Rebecca was attracted by the wealth and riches of Isaac as displayed by his servant. Sion itself must have spiritual wealth to draw out the riches of the nations. The Lord only draws out when there is something to be drawn to, not when there is nothing. If we are going to be used to draw out for the Lord the wealth of the nations, it is only as we ourselves have the riches and wealth of the Lord. The necessity

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for Sion, those who represent and are the expression of Himself, is greater fullness ...
(incomplete?).

Chapter 5 – Sion’s Unity and Fellowship

Reading: Psalm 50; 84; 122; Eph. 4:13-16; Col. 2:19.

The more literal translation of Psalm 122:3 is something worth mentioning: “Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compacted together!” That implies that God’s emphatic thought is now about to be expressed. Looking upon the historic literal Jerusalem this is the impression that the Psalmist had about Jerusalem. You can see behind it a spiritual thought and for our present spiritual purpose we see clearly that here is a setting forth of Jerusalem as God sees it. Then follows a description, “*Jerusalem, a true city all joined together as one*”. Sion representing the divine thought sets forth the basis and nature of the true spiritual unity and fellowship. When you read the psalms you will be impressed with the delight and joy that is characteristic of the Lord’s true people when they contemplate Sion, the joy there is in these psalms of Sion, what joy there is as the people move towards Sion. There is the joy of a common objective, the joy of a mutual interest. It seems that as the people are moving from their distinct places towards Sion, they have left all that is personal — all that is individual disappears — and they are found as one in a great common joy. This seems to have matured into a most joyous fellowship, because their eyes are all on one common object and their hearts are all in one direction. They meet at one focal point which is Sion. In heart and spirit they have already come to Sion.

Their progress is progress in fellowship. They have not yet reached Sion, they have still a long way to go, but get your heart set on Sion and you will soon find fellowship. We become units and fragments as we lose sight of Sion, but this disappears as our hearts are dominated by Sion.

These passages which we have read in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 2 bring us directly and definitely into touch with the Head. His headship governs everything and all else follows. “*Hold fast the Head ...*”. Sion means Christ as the centre and the Head. Every believer must be under the domination of the head completely. We must ask ourselves in every matter whether we are seeking the Lord’s glory or our own. The Lord is King in Sion. So we cannot be part of Sion without him being King in us, we must bow utterly to His kingship, and this means progress and joy.

Sion is the Lord expressed as head in a people, a fellowship. Sion is a divine order, a working and moving together under the headship of Christ. There is nothing independent. The very headship of Christ demands mutuality among the saints and no individualism. The test of whether He is dominating in our lives is when we come up against difficult people. We must submit ourselves to one another. This is the test as to whether the Lord is supreme in our lives. This finds out as to how far the Lord has got His grip upon our hearts. It must be a giving way of personal feelings and no standing up for our own personal rights.

Progress towards Sion, that is, towards Christ in full expression, is a matter of letting go all that is personal and individual. This people are making progress and are going on together because they are dominated by one thing, that is the fullness of Christ. This people went up as one solid whole and that in great joy. They sang the songs of ascent. They were progressing full of joy and they only made progress because their hearts were set on the fullness of Christ. Their hearts were set upon Christ being fully formed.

Paul’s own spiritual life is worth looking into. Colossians 1:28-29 dominated his life. Upward progress is the nature and expression of Sion (Ps. 84:5b “In whose heart are the highways of Sion”). The heart is delighting in the ways of Sion. There is a heart concern

for the fullness of Christ, and the heart is set on this fullness. This is fellowship. Fellowship ceases when one stops going on, it is the going on that makes fellowship not the spiritual point reached. It is not the measure of revelation but the heart movement and direction. The basis of this spiritual unity is stated in Psalm 50:5. The Lord has made the covenant by sacrifice; it is not anything that we do in the first case. The word "made" is not a perfect translation. It is better: "*Ye that have solemnized My covenant by sacrifice*". It is our entering into the meaning of His cross. Such a movement is a costly thing, it is costly to the flesh; it costs friends, reputation, etcetera. It cuts clean across tradition. It means suffering of different kinds.

In Revelation we see a Lamb standing on mount Sion. The Lamb dominates Sion; the Lamb is pre-eminent. It is, too, a slain Lamb. This is a type of the cross which alone brings a people to completeness. We can only come to Sion by way of the cross, and solemnly so.

There is perfect fellowship in Sion. The unity of the members of Sion does not begin with anything down here in any outward way. It begins in Himself in heaven. It is heart-moving towards the Lord that finds fellowship, whether you have met others before or not. It is spontaneous. All over the world hearts are going out to the Lord. Real oneness can only be constituted by the Lord dominating the hearts of His children in fulness.