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The Coming of the Kingdom in Power

by T. Austin-Sparks

Transcribed from a spoken message given on 23rd January, 1955.

The gospel by Matthew, gospel by Matthew chapter 16, at verse 28:

"Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain and He was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, I will make here three tents; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

Although we are familiar with this incident of the transfiguration of Jesus, I've always had a feeling that we have not really grasped strongly enough the significance of it. We view it objectively as something that happened in the life of our Lord here, perhaps the most wonderful thing, and then, having read it, become informed of it, we leave it there and fail to realise that there is a tremendous challenge in it, and that it means something of *very great* importance and significance in the whole economy of God. More, we fail to realise that this is *the focal point of all* the Scriptures from the beginning of the Bible up to this point, and from this point onwards, everything past and future meets here, is focused upon this, and this, therefore, contains that which is of tremendous account. The Lord Jesus said with emphasis, "Verily, there are some who stand here, who shall in no wise

taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Pentecost was the fulfilment of that, but the transfiguration was the meaning and nature of that. The two go together - the transfiguration and the coming of the Holy Spirit as He came on the day of Pentecost.

Now, in order to get right to the meaning of this, let us note - and Jesus was always very deliberate and quite calculated in what He did, not just casual, there was nothing casual about Him in word or in deed, it was always with a very large conscious background which pressed into what He said and what He did, it was not just something in itself. And so here it says that, "Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John... and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart." Peter and James and John, more than any others of the disciples of our Lord, were those who had the great Kingdom complex. They, in the very full way, were looking for the coming of the Kingdom. They had all the Jewish concept of the Kingdom and all the Jewish expectation of the Kingdom, and from various ejaculations of theirs it is quite clear that they were thinking in terms of the Israelitish kingdom coming in relation to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the *kingdom* to Israel?". That is their mentality, their expectation, their hope. We can say this trio was a kingdom trio in mentality and concept and expectation. It was as though all this system of truth or teaching about the Kingdom was focused upon and gathered up into those three men.

And Jesus taketh them deliberately apart up into the high mountain and was transfigured before *them*. They were the spectators of this. *They* were the ones who had this unique experience. Jesus was giving them an object lesson of the Kingdom. The transfiguration is the great object lesson of the Kingdom. If you look at all the features you will see how truly that was so. Jesus had said, "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom". That is the first significant thing.

The Son of Man in His Kingdom

That is relationship to man, that is *man* being brought in according to God. This Kingdom is the Kingdom which God intended *man* to have, to be *man's* Kingdom. It is the Kingdom of the Son of man as representing *man* according to God's mind.

And so at once we are taken right back to the beginning of the Bible, and we see what God intended regarding the first man — to give him the Kingdom! "Thou makest him to have dominion" (Psa. 8:6). The *Kingdom* was the great idea in God's mind in the creation of man, that *all things* should be put under his feet. See? But that first man missed the Kingdom or lost the Kingdom, and it was not only a matter of government. *Why* he lost the Kingdom was because he became another kind of man, for this Kingdom belongs to a certain *kind* of man, and Adam, the first for whom it was intended, changed his nature by disobedience, by unbelief, and so he missed it or lost it. Another, the last Adam, comes in and recovers what Adam lost or missed - the Kingdom.

But He shows what kind of a man is the Kingdom man, and you have two things here in this presentation of the transfigured Son of man. One is moral perfection. Here He is presented in all the purity and perfection of moral victory, tested, proved in every way in which a man can be tested and proved, emerging triumphant after all. There is nothing more really to be done so far as He personally is concerned. If He descends the mountain and goes to the cross, that is not on His own account. That's to bring the other men into the Kingdom, but on His own account all is done. He has reached the point of moral perfection, tested and tried. And so perfection is written large in the very description of Him here: His garments and His face - the picture of moral and spiritual perfection.

The other, and consequent upon that, is glory.

Glory

And when you put those two things together, you know what the Kingdom is. It is spiritual and moral perfection *in manhood* issuing in glory. That is a word very difficult to understand. Of course, we usually do associate with the word "glory" the accompaniments of this transfiguration - bright, glistening, fierce light. That is quite true in this sense: if you find a person who is really, really by the grace of God overcoming, they are up against something that calls for much grace, maybe in themselves, some difficulty, some handicap, some discouragement, something that is so calculated to make them anything but, but triumphant Christians; or it may be in some other person with whom they have to live and work, it may be in the home, it may be in the business, it may be anywhere, and it's an awful trial, these people are an awful trial to them, but if you see these people triumphant through the grace of God over those trials, you do see something about them that is glory, you can even see it in their countenance. How different they are from the people who are *under* their troubles. Their face tells whether they are over or under. There is something you recognise there of glory. Glory! It is a very faint illustration of this thing.

Jesus has triumphed, reached the point of *absolute* victory on all matters, and the glory follows. The glory follows. I do believe that when we are glorified together with Him, there will be something very light about us - I don't mean frivolous - something light and bright and glorious. We'll be *radiant* people, that's the word: *radiant* people. It's going to be a glorious place in heaven in this sense - that everybody's going to be so radiant.

Now, here is Christ the Son of man *radiant*, and the basis of His radiance is His spiritual life. That's the Kingdom! It was for that that man was created. It was *that* which he lost. It is *that* which the last Adam has recovered in His own Person, and here in the transfiguration He gives these three representatives of the great theory of the Kingdom a real object lesson of what the Kingdom really is. The Kingdom is not you sitting upon thrones and exercising your importance over other people, ordering them here and there and all that sort of thing. This is the Kingdom: the Kingdom is in terms of spiritual victory resulting in spiritual radiance.

Now, when He came in His Kingdom on the day of Pentecost, look how radiant they are! See how so many of those things which had bothered them and troubled them in themselves and with one another up to that point, just disappeared. They were a quarrelsome crowd; couldn't get on together even when they were with the Lord. They're always, always spoiling things by their wrong approaches and reactions and interests and ambitions. But see now! There's a mighty victory over all that. We could say it was never before possible for those twelve men to stand up together. They might have done it physically, but to really have stood up *together* is a mighty victory over temperamental differences and all that sort of thing of the natural man. It's a mighty victory to really be *together*: *one* voice, *one* heart, *one* mind, *one* objective. They're together. Lots of *things* have been transcended now by the coming of the Kingdom. The sovereign rule of the glorified Lord has descended upon them, and that which had been so contrary to the Divine idea of the Kingdom, has just gone out, has just gone out; and there's radiance there... filled with joy. Just filled with joy! It's a wonderful picture really of transfigured men, isn't it? And the church is supposed to be a transfigured church on that basis.

Here you've got the heart of the transfiguration. It's the Kingdom: what God meant, what man missed, what Christ has brought in in His own Person and unto which He has called us, unto His eternal Kingdom. It was a wonderful event. I started by saying this is the right focal point of history; I think it was the greatest thing that had ever happened in the history of mankind, was the transfiguration of our Lord, and yet the newspapers said nothing about it, the world knew absolutely nothing about it, completely ignorant of it for the time being. It's not found in any historical record at all apart from the New Testament, and the greatest thing in the history of mankind, the Kingdom, is always like that. The world cannot appreciate it, cannot understand it, cannot apprise it. The world really does not know anything about this. Its, *its* system of values is altogether different from *spiritual* values and *moral* perfections, and therefore it can't appreciate even the joy and the radiance of Christians. The world looks on at the radiant Christian, and says, "I don't know what it's all about, what you're making all the fuss about." It just cannot appreciate, but it's the greatest thing in history.

Well, this whole thing needs to be analysed much more thoroughly, but we're not going to be able to do that this morning. But note: these men, these men Peter, James and John, as beforehand representatives of that *other* idea of the Kingdom, and now the nucleus of this *new* idea of the Kingdom, these men felt the impact of that Kingdom that day. We even have to excuse Peter for, as we say, "putting his foot in it". It was an awful blunder that Peter made, but there you are, you see. When you get an overwhelming experience, you make all sorts of blunders. You get carried away from yourself. And so he blurted this thing out. But the fact is that these men went down under the impact of this thing. This was the Kingdom coming in power, and when the Kingdom comes in power, *we go down*, we just have to go down. Dear friends, this is, this is the test and the challenge of the Kingdom where we are concerned. We've got all the teaching about the Kingdom, we've got a number of different systems of teaching about the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven, and so on. But it is not our teaching, it is not our system, it's the effect that it has upon us. And really, to truly hold the truth of the Kingdom means that we are people who have gone down with our faces to the ground before the revelation of Jesus Christ. This thing is too much for us, it's overwhelming, it's a tremendous thing. We just fall on our faces; we are like dead people. Is that how the presentation of Divine truth comes to us? Do you ever sit in the presence of the presentation of the Lord Jesus, either in a meeting or with your Bible, and as it's going on, you're hearing, or you're reading, you bow your head and say, "It's too big for me, too wonderful, it's overwhelming"? I don't mean intellectually overwhelming, but spiritually. This is *tremendous*, *this is tremendous!* It touches the heart like that, and unless, unless that is true, there's something lacking in our apprehension of truth. Truth ought to bring us to our knees. The presentation of Jesus Christ ought to humble us and empty us, and we ought to go down on our faces - yes, if you like, in fear and trembling, anyhow, so long as we go down, and that's what happened to them. It came, it came in power, in representation, in the Person of the Son of Man that day, and it registered something overwhelming upon them. You know that, because it was *many* years after this, *many* years after this event that Peter wrote about it. "This voice we heard... when we were with Him in the holy mount" read further what he says about it. "You had better take heed", you'd better take heed he says, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." See? Peter never forgot it. It came back to Peter with renewed force and it went through to the end of his life with him. Something like that.

Now, we may not have the physical, objective sight of a transfigured Lord, but the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit would make the glorified Lord glorious to us. You see, it's borne out, it's borne out all along. When John himself so many years afterwards saw this Son of Man, he said, "I fell on my face as one dead". When Saul of Tarsus saw the glorified Jesus of Nazareth, he was down on his face, a

broken, crushed man, helpless - impotent in his own strength. We need to recover, do we not, this element of the wonder and glory and greatness of the Christ about whom we hear so much, that *He* should be redeemed from a commonplace, saved from familiarity; our hearts should be deeply moved.

Now I've only time for saying perhaps one other thing. Peter? Well, we'll excuse him. Probably we should do something very much like that in such an experience. "This he said," says another writer, "not knowing what he said". All right: but when he said it, heaven took serious account of it. And while he was yet speaking, a cloud overshadowed them, a *reaction* of God from heaven, and a voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him". Now then, the whole question and issue of utter subjection to the Lord is brought in at that point. *That is the Kingdom!* You may talk foolishly, frivolously, impulsively, but look here - you'd better subject all your talking to the absolute domination of your Lord. Don't our tongues want to come under the Lordship of Christ, oh they do! And our tongues therefore are to be touched by the *Kingdom* and transfigured. Tongues have got to be delivered from that which is not the glory and purity of the Kingdom of the Son of Man. And in every other way this little phrase, "Hear ye *Him*" - don't you go dictating to Him; don't you make suggestions to Him: *you listen to Him*. That's the law of the Kingdom. Christ is the first and the last. *Christ* is the only One from whom we are to take our orders, our instructions. We have got to be there where we refer everything to Him, we defer everything to Him, where He is in the place of absolute Lordship.

Isn't it an amazing thing? I think it becomes the more amazing when we consider it - here is the Son of Man transfigured and glorified in that brief moment as an object lesson and an example, but look at Him again and consider and contemplate all that that means, all that that signifies - *a Man* in the glory, *a Man* glorified because perfected - all that that means. We can't grasp it. And then, listen - "And ye *killed* the Lord of glory" - a terrible thing to contemplate, *killed* that One! Here He is, look at Him, look at Him: transformed, transfigured, and then "kill Him". He was no other Son of Man or Son of God that they crucified than the One on the mount; He was the same One. The point is just this: that we need really, we need really to have our eyes opened to the Lord Jesus to save us from making the most *awful*, awful blunders where His honour and His glory are concerned. They did it because they were blind, and they were blind because they were prejudiced, and see what they did because they were prejudiced! It is not two Christs, the Christ of the Transfiguration Mount, and the Christ hanging on the cross. It's the same Christ, and they can do that as the result of prejudice. They can do that, a thing like that, because their hearts are not willing to have Him as Lord, as King. Oh, what we can do by reason of a closed heart and a closed mind. How necessary it is, then, for us to be in the place of openness to the Lord and what it will lead us into. Do you get my point? *Openness to the Lord will lead us right into that which Adam lost, the glorious Kingdom*. Openness to the Lord is the first thing back into the Kingdom. Closedness to the Lord, like Jewish prejudice, meant that Israel lost the Kingdom. And that's the Kingdom

Oh, may the Lord give us an open heart, an unprejudiced mind, a pure spirit, transparent honesty, and see what it will lead to. It will lead to the Kingdom, and the Kingdom as we have been saying recently is not just a system of things, although it will become that eventually. It's a nature; it's a spiritual power. It will lead us to glory. There is no glory along the line of a closed heart, or a closed mind of prejudice, fear and suspicion. That's the way away from glory. The open heart, the submission, subjection to Christ, is the way into the Kingdom.