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The Kingship of Jesus Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

Transcribed from a message given in January, 1965.

Now in these few minutes I'm going to take you back again to what we have read a few minutes ago, this great, wonderful story of the Lord Jesus giving His life for men. And you will have noticed that this whole scene circles round and centres in one issue. It was that that brought things to this position. It was that that governed all that was happening. And that issue was: the *kingship* of Jesus Christ.

The Kingship of Jesus Christ

You notice how that was the trouble with the Jews, their rulers, their priests, and many of their people, the charge that they leveled against Him was that He claimed to be a king. He claimed kingship. You notice that it was that that disturbed and worried Pilate, the Roman ruler, "Art Thou a king?" he said. "Art Thou a king?" All that that involved for him was no small matter.

As to the Jews, as a nation they had been without a king for hundreds of years. David, the great king of Israel with his son Solomon, were really the last of the great kings. Quite a few other men took the throne and tried to be king, but every one of them was a failure, a terrible failure; they died in tragedy. And it could be said over the whole lot, hardly one of them was really a king. Kingship came to an end with David and Solomon. And over all the centuries up to the time which we're reading, they had no king.

At this time the Romans had overrun their land, and the Roman representatives, like Pilate, were in charge of things. The Jews, for hundreds of years of being without a king, but the one thing that they wanted and needed more than anything else, was a king. All their prophets, during those hundreds of years were prophesying about the coming of a king, their king. The one thing they longed for was

this king. And the one thing they certainly needed for their salvation, and for peace, and prosperity, was a king - a *true* king. For when David reigned, the situation was such as to bring the nation into real blessing and prosperity. That has all gone.

Jesus came. He presented Himself (or was presented to them) as the king in answer to all their hopes, expectations, desires, needs, and longings, according to all the Scriptures and the prophecies. He came in fulfilment of them all and here He is. It's not a false issue, it's not a wrong thing, He is not pretending, He is no pretender. He *is* the king. He is the One that they need. He is the One of whom the prophets have spoken, but although He was God's appointed King (there's no doubt about that, as I think we shall see before we're through) you see what happened where the Jews were concerned. They had their own ideas about the kind of king they wanted, and He did not just fit in to their ideas. What they wanted was that the king that they had should just make possible the gratification of every earthly, selfish, desire; just answer to all that *they* wanted in this world - a perfectly selfish thing - and for them the question of right and righteousness and purity of life, all such matters, they were of quite a secondary importance.

Jesus was not that kind of king. Jesus put the matter of a right kind of life first; the kind of life that satisfies God, He put that first. He was to be King in this sense: He was to reign over the *hearts* of men and not just over their bodies to gratify and satisfy them, but to change their hearts. And these people were not interested in that! They were not concerned about that. And when they saw Him, in many ways, He did not just fit into their ideas of a king, and so this is what happened. This is what happened.

You see, it was the question of sin. Sin! Jesus as King must deal with the sin question. He knows quite well that that's the trouble, that it is sin that ruins and wrecks men's lives, that robs them of the peace that they need in their hearts. It is *sin* that lies at the root of all human troubles. And to be King, in His case, means that that's got to be dealt with. That's got to be dealt with, He must get right to the root of all men's misery, and men's disappointment, and men's suffering, and men's wretchedness, and the evil that is in this world because of men's nature. He must get right to the root of that and deal with that. That's the kind of King He is. But they didn't want *that* sort of thing. No, that was not what they wanted. And as He, as He continually pointed out, this, this cause of trouble in them - sin, sin - made them rebel and rebut. And this awful thing grew in their hearts until at last when they could get their chance, they take Him, bring Him before the ruler, and their cry is: "Away with Him, crucify Him." That was their choice. That was their act, and you notice how far men will go when they get stirred right down there where really the cause of the trouble is and they're not prepared to have it dealt with.

If you had gone to any of those Jewish rulers or priests at any other time and said to them, "So, uh, Caesar is your king, is he?" You know, they would have killed you on the spot. You, your life, wouldn't have been worth anything if you'd suggested such a thing to them - that Caesar was their king. They would have said, "We absolutely refuse to recognise Caesar as our king! We will not allow the suggestion that Caesar is our king. Why should we for a moment admit that a foreigner who has come in, taking possession of our land and subjected us to him and made us pay tribute and taxes, why should we admit that he is our king? Never! Never!" But see how far they would go when this sin question is touched, this matter of life: "*We have no king but Caesar!*" How far they went to get rid of this One who was really touching the cause of all human trouble: sin. "*We have no king but Caesar...*" hold on to that a little while and you see what they do - "away with Him, crucify Him." And they will, they will accept no argument, they will accept nothing other than the death by crucifixion of this One who touches the sin question.

Leave that for a moment and look over to Pilate. Pilate, this representative in their city, their capital, in their country, of the Roman Empire. It's a very impressive story, this. If you read the different accounts in the different gospel's records, it's tremendously impressive. This is the thing that is so impressive, that this man Pilate is like a rat in a trap. If that sounds too strong, he is like a lion in a cage. He's a man who has been trapped, who has been caught, and he is doing everything conceivable, resorting to every imaginable cause to get out of this predicament, out of this situation. Look at him, he's writhing. He's doing everything; he's going round. He tries this. It doesn't work. He tries that. It doesn't work. He tries something else. It doesn't work. Every time he tries to find a back door out of this situation, he finds there's no escape at all and he has to come to the front door again. You notice how in the story that we've read again and again, it said, "Then he came out, then he came out...". He went in and he made an effort to get out of the difficulty, but he didn't get out and he had to come out again to the front door like that; the man is just trapped.

In the government of God Pilate was confronted with this issue. Jesus, God's appointed King and Saviour, has been presented to Pilate, in a sense put into his hand, and it is as though God was saying, "What are you going to do with My King? What are you going to do with Him? You have got the chance of a lifetime. What are you going to do about it?" And this man is wavering between what he knows in his own conscience he ought to do, his conscience is working, and he says repeatedly, "I find no crime in the man. I don't find any fault in Him. So far as I can see, there's nothing wrong with Him. Then if that's true, and I'm in a position to do anything about it, what is the thing, the right thing for me to do?" Other things, you see. You see: "Um, my position and my interests in this world and my name. All that; these are matters I've got to think about, you know: policy, diplomacy, and my future, how it's going to affect *me*, what I am going to lose or gain. These are things to be looked at quite seriously..." and so he prevaricated with his conscience, his duty, and with what he thought to be his worldly advantages. But the point is this: that God was shutting him up to a definite and deliberate decision. He could not get out of it. He had to do it in the end.

Don't you think it's a terrible thing? I don't think there's anyone here, however low we might have got, however many lies we might be prepared to tell in life, I don't think any of us here but feels as we read this story, "Well, well, Pilate is not a very admirable kind of man. Not really the right kind. Pilate was wrong." I think we all have a sufficient moral sense to say he was a coward. He was afraid. He was thinking of number one when he knew quite well - he knew quite well and he said with his own lips what he ought to do with Jesus and with this conviction that the man was not wrong at all, no crime in Him, nothing worthy of death. It says at last, "Then delivered he Him to them to be crucified."

Now, you say, "That's all right, that's in the Bible, that's a story of history long long ago. What's the point?" Just this is the point: that God has set aside a whole period in the history of this world, and that is the period in which we are living tonight. And He has set aside this period to bring men and women to that decision, to present His Son Jesus Christ to them as King, as Lord, as Saviour. And He just faces them up with this issue.

Don't let us think that it's just an accident, or a hap, or a chance, or a coincidence that we're here in this place tonight. There's a sovereignty of God behind all this. And this is the age in which God throughout this whole world is presenting His Son to men and saying, "What are you going to do with Him? What are you going to do about this matter of whether My Son is to be King in your life or not? What's your answer?" See, when Jesus rose from the dead (and He rose from the dead after they had crucified Him) He called His disciples together, the first group of men, and He said, "Now you go into all the world. Go into all the world and preach." And preach. What did He say? "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth". He's King. "Go into all the world and say so.

Preach it. Offer Me as King to men." And that's been going on all these years. It's going on all over the world today.

Everywhere, everywhere men and women are being presented with this issue: Jesus is God's appointed King for your life. What are you going to do about it? And you can go over this world today - some of you no doubt have been in different parts of this world - and go to countries of this world and you can see all the difference it has made to the lives of men and women, that they have allowed Jesus to become King of their life. Tremendous difference, marvelous difference. On the one side, it does mean salvation. It *does* mean peace within. It *does* mean fellowship with God. Oh, it means so much. You go to any - why, you can go to some here tonight and ask them about it. They know the difference that Jesus has made. Go all over this world and you will hear what men and women have to say as to the tremendous difference that Jesus has made.

If you went to a country like India, for instance, I know it's a dark country, a country of awful sin. Well, whether we ought to talk like that about another country... because this country is pretty awful for its sin, but sin seems to be so naked in such countries as those, and darkness and misery, people, people of that country so oppressed and depressed, so evil, so miserable, and so unhappy. But then as you move about you see other kinds of people. This is the thing that impresses. It's the thing that impressed me more than anything else when I first went to India, and every time I went to India: here are people whose faces are beaming with smiles, who are singing and are happy. Yes, thoroughly happy. There they are together having such a good time, and clocks and watches don't matter in that country. Indeed they have no patience with watches and clocks. Hours and hours and hours together singing. What's done it? They let Jesus be King. You ask them! That what's made the difference. And here are these two entirely different kinds of people - the depressed and miserable, wretched and the happy and the joyous. It's because when God through His messengers brought Jesus before them and offered Him as King and said, "What are you going to do? What are you going to do?" And they had (to use the words of Pilate): "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? What shall I do?" and they said, *these* people said, "He will be King. He will be what God intended Him to be: King of our life."

Oh the difference, what a difference it would have made for the Jews if they had taken that course. But you see, on the other hand, what a difference it made. They said (and I told you a few minutes ago to hold on to something): "We have no king but Caesar". They chose Caesar and they got him, and they got him. A few years after this, Caesar's legions came in full force to their country, destroyed their city, brought it level with the ground, destroyed their temple, killed their priests, drove the people all over the earth and scattered them. From that day to this, they've never had a king, they have never had a temple, a house of God. They chose Caesar; they got him.

We can *choose* something as an alternative to Jesus Christ and get it. That's a terrible thing to choose an alternative to Jesus Christ. Pilate represented the Roman Empire, and *he* made this decision about Jesus. He said, "No, I'm not going that way. I'm not going to accept that. I have my own interests to look after. I'm not going that way." He decided. What happened? Presently the Roman Empire followed the way of the Jews - the whole mighty Roman Empire from Caesar downward followed that way to destroy everything that belonged to Jesus Christ. All over the world. They massacred 10 million Christians. They said, "We will *not* have this Man reign over us. Crucify Him." I ask you today: where's the Roman Empire? Where is it? Well, it's in the history books. And you can see the ruins of it if you go to Italy and to Rome today. It isn't. It isn't. It's gone! It suffered an *awful* destruction - the greatest empire that this world has known and it's passed out.

Where is Jesus Christ today? In millions upon millions of lives all over this world today, you'll find His subjects in almost every country if not every country of this world, and that has been going on for nearly 2,000 years. Think of the vast, vast host of subjects of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ that there must be in heaven as well on this earth. No wonder the last book of the Bible puts it like this about them, "10,000 times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." It's beggaring language to describe the number of those who have made Jesus King!

You see the Jewish nation, how it has suffered through the 2,000 years. Oh, how they've suffered. The Roman Empire, how it's been wiped out. And that is true of every other one who has tried to take the place of Jesus Christ as universal King. In our own life, why, we've known some men who've done that, who wanted to have the whole world under their control. What's happened to them? What's happened to a Hitler, to a Mussolini? They all set themselves to be *the* reigning force over the whole world. What's happened to them? No, God has reserved this for One and that's His Son. It's a *tremendous* thing to reject Jesus Christ. It's a *glorious* thing to accept Him.

And that's all I need to say. You have to say tonight to your own heart, "What should I do with Jesus?" I'm quite sure that if you knew all that is involved in your decision - for good, if you let Him be King, for loss, for tragedy, if you refuse to do so - you would say tonight, "I make Jesus King. I accept Him as my Lord, as my Saviour." And you (it will not be long, I think probably before you go out from this place) you would know at once in your heart that you've done the right thing and you've done a glorious thing. For that has been true of many, many, many in this world. They've known when they have received the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts as Lord and Saviour, they've done the best day's work that ever they did and a better day's work than ever they thought they would do. It's like that.

Shall we pray. We ask, oh Lord, that Thou would come upon this simple word and press Thine own issue on to every heart and give to any here who have not come to a decision about this matter, give them the help tonight to say, "Jesus shall henceforth be my Lord, my Saviour. *He* shall reign over my life." So help... we ask it in His Name.