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## The Power of the Kingdom

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19).*

*"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" (Matt. 16:28).*

*"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).*

*"Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*

*"Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven... And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold are not all these that speak Galilaeans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? ...we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God... But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice... saying..." (Acts 2:5-14).*

The whole matter of the kingdom of heaven can be reduced to one simple issue. In all the above passages it is undoubtedly the kingdom of heaven which is in view, and which is governing. Pentecost saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, and the exercise of the authority concerning that kingdom of which the Lord had spoken to Peter. The disciples still had some earthly ideas of the Kingdom, but by the happenings on the day of Pentecost they were lifted completely out of their old ideas and came to see that the whole matter of the Kingdom, as regards this dispensation, was bound up with the person of the Lord Himself - that it is Himself present and manifested in power by the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom is not, in the first place, what is so commonly implied when people speak of 'extending the Kingdom,' meaning thereby the realm in which Christianity is propagated and converts are secured. The Kingdom in its inception at all times is the Lord Jesus present in power. "Ye shall be my witnesses" - that is the simple issue of the Kingdom. It is not a movement, it is not a teaching and it is not an institution. It is firstly Christ; then it is 'ye'. It is Christ present by the Holy Spirit in people - and manifestly present.

This coming of the Kingdom on the day of Pentecost, or Christ the Son of man coming in His kingdom, changed everything from negative to positive. Up to that point, everything was negative where the disciples were concerned. Now everything became positive. The Kingdom is very positive. Christ is very positive. The Holy Spirit is very positive. Where Christ and His kingdom by the Holy Spirit are in people, things are of a positive character. It is not a case of just being there, just going on from day to day, just waiting for something to happen; the Kingdom is there. There is a witness for Christ. It does not have to be organised. At Pentecost it was not organised at all. I recently read the statement of a modernist trying to interpret these things, and his word on this matter was that on the day of Pentecost the Apostles came to the conclusion that they had to form a society. Nothing could be farther from the mark, more utterly out of keeping with what God was doing, than such a statement. What happened was spontaneous; and that is the point about the Kingdom - it happens. Where it is a matter of lives made positive by the power of Christ in the Holy Spirit, everything else follows.

It is remarkable how much was included in this. First of all, you notice that the feature of the universality of Christ was very clearly and powerfully displayed. There were all these languages and tongues represented in Jerusalem. There is a Rabbinical statement that the whole range of human languages at that time was seventy. It seems clear that the intention of Luke was to show that practically the whole world in tongue and language was represented in Jerusalem, and then, by this miracle, all those differences of language, tongue, nationality, were suddenly transcended. The universality of Christ, of His gospel, of the Church, of the Kingdom, transcended all the earthly aspects; and more - it overcame all the results of Satanic interference with the race in disintegration and division. What a marvellous thing it was! But that is all part of the Kingdom.

The point is, the Kingdom is so positive, and it is not an organised thing. It is not something set up in an external framework. It is the Lord present in us in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that, without any appointments or institutions, constitutes us positive factors; there is nothing negative about us at all. I do feel that is a point upon which we should focus for personal exercise. Supposing we take out of our lives any given period of a few months or a year; how far can we say that our life in that period has been positive, there has been some registration, some real impact? How far do we have to say that it has just been a matter of carrying on, and we have not been positive at all; there has been no impact? It is a simple, concrete issue which we ought to take up before the Lord day by day. 'Now, Lord, today at least my presence here must be a positive thing so far as the Kingdom is concerned, so far as Thou art concerned; I desire that Thou shalt be positively manifested whatever I am doing.' I think that both men and the powers of evil should have something to reckon with in our being here. That is how it was in the "Acts". The world and the devil had to reckon with the presence of these people. Their mere presence was a menace. It must be like that, that we count, that we mean something that is positive, that there is some mark left by our going on from day to day. "Ye shall receive power... and ye shall be my witnesses". That implies the presence of men in whom the Kingdom has become a reality by the power of the Holy Spirit.