

# The Kingdom of Satan and Its Overthrow

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the authority of Christ and the Church's mission to manifest His power against the kingdom of Satan through spiritual training and personal embodiment of Christ's character.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1, Proverbs 16:5, Isaiah 14:12, Ezekiel 28:11, Matthew 28:18, John 13:8, Ephesians 1:19, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:4

**Topics:** "Spiritual Authority", "Satanic Strongholds"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks delves into the profound truth of all authority being given to Jesus in heaven and on earth, as highlighted in Matthew 28:18-19. He expands on Ephesians 1:19-23, revealing the extensive scope of Christ's authority over all realms and His headship over the Church. Sparks challenges believers to align with God's supreme objective of forming a Church that reflects the fullness of Christ, emphasizing the need for personal spiritual transformation and discipline to manifest Christ's sovereignty in the spiritual realm. He explores the origin and nature of sin, emphasizing the essentiality of the Cross in dealing with self-interest, rebellion, and perversity, which are the stronghold of Satan's kingdom within individuals.

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## Transcript

"And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore..." (Matt. 28:18-19).

"...and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:19-23).

This passage from Eph. 1 is a very wonderful enlargement of the brief statement of the Lord Jesus that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him. The Apostle makes this wonderful exposition of the Lord's own fragment, showing what fulness was included in that "all authority" - far above all principality, all power, all dominion, all names, all ages. That is the "all authority" in its range and compass and content. Then the Apostle says, in effect, that when the Lord Jesus said to His disciples "Go ye therefore...." - 'for this reason, because of this, go ye' - that self-same fulness was gathered into Himself as head of the Church; that is, that the Church stands directly under all that fulness. It is intended to be

mediated from the head to and through the members. We might well ask, in a sort of paraphrasing of the words of the Ethiopian addressed to Philip in the chariot - 'Speaketh the Apostle of some other Church or of this one? To whom does that relate?' - for it is very difficult to see anything that corresponds to that in the Church that we know. Does that apply to some other entity, or does it apply to us? I say, there is a lot of room for asking that question in the light of how very far short of that comes the Church known to us. But, dear friends, the Church, in the mind of the Apostle Paul - the Church referred to by him there - is the Church into which you and I have been baptized in one Spirit, and that exceeding greatness of Divine Power is to usward who believe.

Well, that is only another way of bringing us straight up against the challenge and the need of this hour, the challenge to measure up, and to find out why the Church is so otherwise, and how it can be according to that declaration. We commenced our meditations with presenting ourselves with this question - What has God revealed as His supreme objective resultant from the Cross of Christ? and what we have just read and said is the answer - a Church corresponding to that description, a people answering to that presentation of the Divine mind. Such is what God has revealed to be the supreme outcome of the Cross - all fulness gathered into His Son as vitally and organically related to His Church, His Body, and that fulness in action; the exceeding greatness of His power in action in and through that Body in the whole cosmic realm.

At the close of our previous meditation we saw that God is really dealing with us with that end in view, and that we are to regard ourselves as being now in God's training-centre - in the place where, for the time being, His will has appointed us. Training-centres, from the Divine standpoint, are not institutions, nor theological seminaries, but where we are in the will of God - that is our training-centre; and we called upon ourselves to adjust to that, with this mind, that here God has chosen to equip us for the greatest ministry to which mortals have ever been called - the expression of the exaltation and sovereign headship of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to follow that up for a little, resuming at that point concerning our equipment for this ministry along the line of personal spiritual experience, discipline, training - equipment for this great Divine purpose of expressing in this universe, and especially in the great realm of spiritual powers and intelligences, the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus, firstly in terms of Divine life triumphing in us over the death that is working in us and over our natural life; and secondly in terms of Divine knowledge greater than any other kind of knowledge - the only kind of knowledge that can undo and set aside the far-reaching and deep-rooted deception of the false knowledge which Satan succeeded in getting the race to take hold of at the beginning; and then thirdly, in terms of spiritual influence - the registration of something which is not to be accounted for by any human magnetism or personal impress or anything at all that belongs to man or woman - a spiritual, Divine influence.

These are the things which constitute the curriculum of the spiritual training which God has undertaken to accomplish in you and in me with a view to meeting that spiritual realm, and that is the service, above all other service, to vindicate the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

God's Quest - Spiritual Personality in Terms of Christ

Well then, that means one thing. It means that God is after persons. It is persons that are needed - not first preachers, teachers, 'workers,' ministers, missionaries, in the technical sense, but persons. Oh, what a false position we may find ourselves in by these titles! How many a one is called a missionary who is no

missionary at all, or a minister who is no minister! There is something much deeper than the title. No title makes us what the title represents, and we can have the title and the uniform and not be the person. No, it is neither official people nor things that God is after - not exponents of some spiritual ideology, teaching, system of truth, but persons, just persons. We have to learn anew to draw lines of distinction. There is all the difference between a church in the New Testament sense, and a congregation. There is all the difference between praying and a prayer meeting. You can have a prayer meeting without praying in the true spiritual sense. There is all the difference between living testimonies on the one hand and ordinances and rites on the other; and there is all the difference between people who officially represent something, and personal embodiments of Jesus Christ. Yes, the main feature in our spiritual training is the person being trained; not the subjects being studied, but the persons being trained.

You see, there is a principle in spiritual training, the training which God is trying to carry out in your life and in mine, and that principle is spiritual personality. And that personality is Christ: not your personality or mine, but Christ's. That principle underlies everything in the Word of God. It is so clear, right on the face of the Scriptures, that God's view of the race is that - it is personal. It is a man; it is Adam.

That is the very principle of representative people in the Bible. Take the priest. The priest is the personal embodiment and representation of the whole nation of Israel. It is a priestly nation, and the priest is the one upon whom God looks as upon the nation. When the priest is right, in a right position and state before God and functioning according to Divine prescribing, the nation is right, and God meets the nation on the ground of the priest. When the priest is wrong, corrupt, polluted, be sure the nation is that, and that is how God sees the nation. It is all gathered up into the one man; the priest. So also with the king: as king, so people. He is the inclusive representation of the nation. It is as though the nation were but one man and that man the king; what the king is, the nation is. You do not need to look very deeply for proof of that. Look at Saul and see the state of the nation when Saul was king. Look at David and see the state of the nation when David was king. And so with prophet. The prophet was the personal representation of the people. He was called upon to do all sorts of extraordinary and strange things, sometimes very degrading and humiliating things, in order to portray to the nation God's view of themselves. What about the very name - Israel? It is the name of a man, of an individual, but it is again the name of a nation; a man's name for a nation. That is the principle, you see; God views the race as a man, as a person.

Now, carry that over to Christ and the principle holds good. Thank God, He does not see us in ourselves. It is Christ Whom He sees when our faith has been reposed in His Son. We sing a tremendous thing when we sing:

What though the accuser roar

Of ills that I have done;

I know them well and thousands more;

Jehovah findeth none.

That is tremendous! God is looking on a Person, and that Person is His Son. That is why we said that a spiritual personality is what God is after, and that it is the personality of His Son. It is, in its effect and outworking, nothing less than - so to speak - bringing out the Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted, glorified Son of God, from heaven into this universe, to register His presence, with all that such a presence means, amongst the forces of evil. You cannot do that except by being that. That cannot be done along any

academic lines of preparation and qualification, or by any official titles and orders; that cannot be done in any other way than this - that God has wrought Christ into us individually in measure, and corporately in the united measures, and that it is Christ coming out by the presence of His people here; Christ moving out, not only on the earth to men and to nations, but primarily, pre-eminently, Christ moving out into the spiritual kingdom back of the nations, back of peoples, back of conditions.

#### The Impact of Christ upon Spiritual Powers

His presence - what ought it to mean? You ask the simple question - if Jesus Christ were here, what would happen? Even in His humiliation, what would happen? Well, there would be a disclosing of themselves on the part of those evil forces; His presence would make it impossible for them to remain hidden. They would cry, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). What a betrayal! Do they know that there is a time for their destruction? They do! And further, they know that He is the One Who is to bring it about. Tremendous, isn't it? Bring Him out, even in His humiliation, and there is registration enough in every realm. But listen - "the exceeding greatness of his power.... according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name..." Bring that Lord in! Oh, this, dear friends, may sound to you like a wonderful idea. You are asking about the practical possibility of it. I believe that God is wanting to say to us that it has got to be much more like that where we are concerned than it has been - we in Christ and Christ in us; we together in that conscious, spiritual relatedness of which we have before spoken; that has got to tell in the spiritual kingdom. The enemy is having far too much ground and way, and it is not God's will that it should be so; and it is as though the Lord were saying to us, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. What are you going to do about it? It is your, matter! Go ye therefore....'

#### Spiritual Personality Secured by the Cross

Now then, - this matter of spiritual personality - which resolves itself into a matter of bringing Christ into events, and that primarily in the spiritual realm - how can it be? And the answer is - only by the Cross, but surely and truly by the Cross. It is the Cross which stands between those two men, the first Adam and the last, representatives of two races. It is just there that the Cross has its place, between the two.

Before we can know what the Cross means, we have to know what those two men really are, what headship in both cases really does imply and mean; for there is a headship on either side. On the one hand is the body of sin; that is racial, the whole race. There is one head to that body of sin. In its own sense and meaning, that head is head over all things to that body of sin. Satan is head over the whole body of sin, the whole race of the first Adam. Christ, the last Adam, is head over this other Body, and head over all things to that Body - "to the church which is his body." We have to understand what headship really means in both cases, and in understanding that headship we shall know what the two men are; and we must understand in order to know the meaning of the Cross.

#### The Root of Sin Dealt with by the Cross

Remember, then, that the Cross goes right behind all that is secondary to what is primary. Sins are secondary; sin is primary. Sins always have been secondary, they are the result of sin; and, while God has made a provision, comprehensive and conclusive, for sins, He has gone right behind and done something very much more in relation to sin. The point in making that distinction is this - you and I must be perfectly clear on this point that, until the primary thing has been dealt with, there is little hope of the secondary

being dealt with. Are you struggling against sins? Well, you will go on struggling. The key to the sins is sin. You have to get behind your sins, to where God has gone. What is sin? Well, sin is Satan's kingdom in principle. Satan's kingdom is not some organised, official system, something literal and temporal, objective. Satan's kingdom is within us, just as, for us as believers, the kingdom of heaven is within us.

## The Origin of Sin

How is Satan's kingdom within us by nature? It is Satan's nature in us that is his kingdom, and his nature is sin. It is a working power, like an evil disease - you may call it a toxin, a poison - permeating the old creation, actively at work in the system of the race. That is sin, and that is Satan's kingdom. Now we have got to deal with that side. You will at once see the other side, but we are not on the other side of the Cross yet. We can begin now here - the Cross and sin, the primary thing. We call it 'original sin.' What do we mean by original sin? Well, we mean something that goes right back to the beginning and follows through from the beginning continuously and is with us as from that far, far distant beginning.

Where was that beginning? The beginning was not only far, far back in man's history, but it was far, far back beyond man's beginnings. Sin commenced with Satan, and there are two factors in original sin where he is concerned: firstly its immediate and close up relationship to God, and secondly its seat in the exercise of the will.

Now let us get hold of our Bibles. Of course, your acceptance of our interpretation will depend entirely upon whether you agree that there is always a double thought and a double side to what God has said in the Old Testament - that there is a present and earthly aspect, and also a permanent and heavenly aspect. If that is accepted, then we have no difficulty with these passages that we are going to read.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O daystar, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations! And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa. 14:12-14).

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was in thee; in the day that thou wast created they were prepared. Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth: and I set thee, so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. By the abundance of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore have I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I have destroyed thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Eze. 28:11-16).

You see the two things that I indicated as factors in original sin. Firstly, its immediate and close-up relationship to God. It is right in the very presence of God; it is something against God; it is a violation of the uniqueness, the solitariness, of God. There can be no two supreme beings in this universe, there can be only one, and anything which challenges that solitary, unique supremacy is a violation of it, is treachery; and that is where original sin began.

The second thing is that its seat is in the exercise of the will. You notice in Isaiah 14 the five-fold 'I will.' It is the heart of sin, the essence of sin; and the prophet, by inspiration, is caused to disclose something which was probably never uttered in words at all by the one to whom the words are attributed. It is probable, indeed I think it is certain, that Lucifer never expressed himself at all in words. "Thou saidst in thy heart" - so that it was a heart matter, an attitude, a state before God. The inspiration of the prophet amounts to this, that he was made to disclose something that had never come out in verbal and audible pronouncement, something that had been deep down in the heart of this one. You remember the familiar words of Heb. 4:12 - "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." That is where God goes. It is deep down there in the inner life that this resolve was made, with this five-fold "I will." It is the inner working of the will, and God knows the secret of all hearts. We do not need to utter it. It may just be there; God knows; and that is original sin. It is deep down in the life.

We may as well face this. It is an ugly thing. We cannot understand the Cross until we know this. This only enhances the glory of the Cross, and brings out its matchless splendour, when we see its immense range - how far back it reaches, how far up and how far down. The Cross is a tremendous thing. Well, you see, that is the origin of sin - what we call original sin - and that is the toxin, that is the poison.

#### The Nature of Sin

Let us look at its nature. "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty" (Eze. 28:17). Oh, then pride is the essence of sin. It is out of pride that sin springs. No wonder the language about pride is so strong! "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5). "Because of thy beauty"; then self-esteem was the cause; and the accompaniment of pride is always rebellion. Did you ever know a proud person satisfied? Bring along somebody else who looks equally well-dressed, well-supplied; see the reaction of the proud person - 'I will go one better!' Pride, you see, gives birth to rivalries at once, and produces this spirit of rebellion, of discontent with even the best position. Pride is never satisfied; it must always get higher, have more, go better than another. It is rebellion; and rebellion in act led to perversity in nature.

In the Old Testament there are two words which mainly cover the ground of sin - transgression and iniquity. They are the two English words for two Hebrew words which mean respectively rebellion (transgression) and perversity (iniquity). Rebellion in an act produced perversity in a nature. We, in Adam, were caught in the act of his rebellion. Adam rebelled, prompted by a spirit of pride - pride provoked by this suggestion: "Hath God said...? ...God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God" (Gen. 3:1-5). Pride flared up, with desire to have and to be something that God never intended - and certainly never intended in that way, along that line.

The act of rebellion, the counterpart of Lucifer's rebellion, issued in a nature; and who will deny that in our very nature, we are perverse? It does not matter, dear friends, how saintly and consecrated and devoted to the Lord you may be, how deep may have been the discipline in your life, and how great a measure of Christlikeness may have been developed in you - if you have a child, see if it inherits all that! Why, it will not be many hours old before you can see and hear 'I will,' 'I will not.' We do not inherit the Christlikeness of our forebears, unfortunately. Perversity is in every fresh generation. It is there, and from what we may call the simple form of that perversity in the rebellious, discontented, peevish cry of the little infant, right up and on to the vast circumference of this whole creation, in all this anarchy, strife, war, murder, cruelty,

'man's inhumanity to man,' it is the same thing, the same nature, the same in-bred perversity. Man cannot tame it, nor eradicate it nor heal it. He may set up his League of Nations or his United Nations Organization with intent to curb or to cure international perversity, and what happens? Well, so much the worse for the League of Nations when it comes into collision with original sin! We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, lovers of Him, devoted to Him, know only too well that if we are put to the test, tried by adversity and by suffering and by disappointment and by frustration and by the Divine withholding from us of those things upon which our hearts are set, is it not all too easy for perversity and rebellion to rise up in us? Is it not all too difficult for us to keep it in check? It is there in the old man; that is the nature of sin. And this in Satan is the very fountain head of all this other with which we are so familiar and which is so common in the creation. That is where it came from and that is its nature, and from this source man has become what he is. That is how it is, that is why it is.

### Self the Stronghold of Sin

Well, then, we must look at man, and what do we find? What is the central thing in man? It is this same thing - self, self, self, in some way. What is born in the blood will come out. Self-will, self-interest; the calculating upon a basis of how a given proposition or course will affect me, whether it will be to my advantage or disadvantage; and so on without end. It is not seen only in grossly sensual forms, nor alone in the more common forms of ambition that might even be called worthy - the desire to climb the ladder of success, and so on. But this thing can move right through into our spiritual life and become a secret hidden motive even in our quest for blessing, for power. It can come out in a Peter who, when his Lord says to him "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8) will respond, with eager desire to have as much for himself as possible, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." I do not want to get you analysing and introspective, but I say we have to get down to this thing before we understand the Cross and before this spiritual personality which is Christ can be developed; for it is only, as we have said, by way of the Cross that self-interest, self-sufficiency, self-realisation, and a dozen other forms of self go out. Not only the self which asserts itself, and is aggressive, imperious, seeking and loving the limelight, but also that which is pitying and drawing attention to itself because it is so poor and miserable and wretched a thing - it is all self. Anything which has the effect of bringing us into view is self, and the Cross stands right in the way of that and says No to the whole thing that came from Satan, whatever form it takes - whether it is self-realisation, asserting, forcing, driving, or self-pity with its negatives and its inferiority. Satan is somewhere behind it all, and he will use it, and the effect is the hiding of Christ; and it has got to be dealt with somehow. That is the school we are in. It is this alliance of fallen man with Satan in the very nature of things which sums up the whole Bible from one standpoint, and shows where God stands in relation to man when man is on his own ground and not on God's ground.

### Sin Essential to Satan's Kingdom

Well, the issue - it is a kingdom. That is where we started. What is the kingdom of Satan? Something out there, remote, objective? Are you proposing to gird on armour and to go out and attack the kingdom of Satan - something at a distance, in India, in China, in the slums of London? No; the kingdom of Satan is first of all within you. Until something has been done within, Satan is not dethroned, his kingdom is not overthrown; it is there. His strength is in the nature that he has bitten into the race as poison, by man's permission and agreement. That is the dark and terrible side, but it is essential that we apprehend the fact and nature of that kingdom. Until you see that clearly, you have not come near to seeing either the meaning of the Cross or of the kingdom of the heavens, for the Cross comes right in there, to say No - fully, finally; for ever, No - to that fallen creation; and, thank God, it not only says No, but accomplishes it

also. We are in the hands of God if we are the Lord's people. We know - and if we do not know there is something wrong somewhere, there is a hindrance somewhere that has got to be looked into - we know, or we ought to know, by the Spirit's witness within us, whenever self asserts itself in any form. Oh, is that not the explanation of those many secret battles and experiences when we have had to get away alone, and have dealings with the Lord? We have said or done something that was not fitting; or our manner, if not the substance of our words, has been wrong; or we have had a self-important bearing, we have been talking about ourselves, and we have been bringing all the tinsel of this life and of this world into view and making something of what belongs to the old creation; and we are miserable afterward, we are wretched about it. 'Oh, was not that all death? Why did I get caught like that?' The only thing to do is to get away into the presence of the Lord and get readjusted. We know a lot about that. We are in the school when that is going on.

I think we must stop there, with just this rounding off. This, dear friends, is the nature of the kingdom that we are called to destroy. This is the nature of the warfare. It is not primarily a matter of dealing with Satan and demons personally, but of dealing with the ground upon which that kingdom is founded and which supports their power. That ground is sin, and sin is this inborn rebellion and perversity. Therefore the overthrow of Satan's kingdom is at the Cross of the Lord Jesus where the background of everything was dealt with, and Satan was cast out - not just personally: do not get pictures of Satan as a person being thrown out - Satan cast out in this sense, that his moral ground of strength was taken from him. He was confronted with another nature in which there was no perversity, and that nature was too strong for him; and there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises whereby we may become partakers of that same Divine nature (1 Pet. 1:4). It is along that line that Satan loses his power.

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