

The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Exaltation of the Lord Jesus

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Holy Spirit is committed to the throne, representing the Lordship, sovereignty, and government of God, and His primary concern is with the exaltation of Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 3:16 - 4:1, Matthew 4:8-10, Matthew 6:13, Acts 2:34-36, Ephesians 1:20-23, Philippians 2:9, Hebrews 9:14

Topics: "Role of the Holy Spirit", "Exaltation of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the critical role of the Holy Spirit in the exaltation of Jesus Christ, illustrating how the Spirit's descent at Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry and the ensuing spiritual conflict with evil. The sermon highlights that the Holy Spirit's primary concern is the establishment of God's kingdom and authority, which is central to the Church's mission against the powers of darkness. Sparks urges believers to recognize their position in Christ's exaltation and to actively participate in the spiritual battle for the throne of God. He asserts that the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to proclaim Jesus as Lord, which is essential for overcoming evil. Ultimately, the message calls for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in relation to the authority of Christ and the Church's role in advancing His kingdom.

Transcript

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16,17).

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil... Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:1,8-10).

"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:34-36).

"...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 not only in this world, but 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. 1:20-23).

The Exaltation of Christ

It will at once be recognized that the thing which is in view in these passages is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, and now as gathered up and vested in the Lord Jesus, and it resolves itself into a matter of the exaltation of Christ. It is all a question of where the kingdom, the power and the glory reside, of where the Lordship is established, where the government is; and this is the grand issue of all time. It runs through the whole of the Old Testament as the supreme issue back of everything else, and you will always be helped if you take account of that fact whenever you are reading the Old Testament. Wherever you read, you will find that things gather round this one issue. The thing which, while it may not immediately be patent, lies there inherently is the seat of government, the place of authority, rule, dominion; and, of course, not only is it there in the Old Testament whether manifestly or hiddenly as the issue behind everything, but it has come out very clearly as the issue in the New Testament. Here, for a very obvious reason, it has been brought right out into the light. That obvious reason we shall mention definitely as we go on; but no longer is the thing hidden when you come to the New Testament, because you hardly begin to read the New Testament with the first chapters of Matthew, before you find this question of the kingdom, the power and the glory, a manifest question, a thing brought right out into the open and made now, not a hidden battle, but a very conspicuous matter of conflict, and from that point right through to the end of Revelation it is this tremendous issue which is being fought out in the heavenlies and having an expression also in the earth. So then, we are now concerned with the issue of all time as becoming more and more manifest as we move toward the end.

This calls for something. It calls for the Church to take up its position most deliberately and positively on the ground of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus; for, until the Church does take that position, there is no hope whatever of the Evil One being cast down. Let me repeat that in the opposite order. The only prospect of the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, the powers of evil, the Satanic system, is by reason of the Church standing into all the meaning of the enthronement of the Lord Jesus. That is the challenge of this hour as it has been the challenge of every hour, and it is becoming a much more pressing challenge. It cannot be more definite than it has ever been, but it is becoming more pressing as we near the end. So it is with that the Lord leads us today to be especially concerned, really solemnly occupied with it, and it spreads itself over several of the primary matters in our Christian life and activity.

The Holy Spirit and the Throne

In the first place, it brings us immediately into touch with the Holy Spirit and all that is signified by the advent of the Holy Spirit. Let us allow a great many of our particular interests in the Holy Spirit to fall away from us for the moment. What I mean is that we have particular interests in the Holy Spirit along the line of gifts, power, sanctification and so on. But let us leave those for a minute. They are truly related to the Holy

Spirit, but they do not represent the inclusive and the pre-eminent concern of the Holy Spirit. They are the outworkings of something else; they follow, they are not initial. What we have to see is that the primary and all-inclusive concern of the Holy Spirit is with the throne. When I use that word "throne" I am speaking about the Lordship, the sovereignty, the government, the dominion; the kingdom, the power and the glory, and the seat thereof, and it is with that, all that is represented by those various words and terms, that the Holy Spirit is primarily concerned. That statement embraces a vast amount in the Word of God. I am not going to attempt to gather up the evidence of that. I simply indicate it from one or two instances.

A familiar one, by way of type, in the Old Testament, is given us at the opening of the book of Joshua, where Joshua is challenged by the presence of the One standing with the drawn sword, who announces Himself as the Captain of the host of the Lord and whom we recognize to be none other than the Holy Spirit Himself, who is always represented as being in possession of the sword. "The sword of the Spirit": familiar words, are they not. Here, then, stands the Holy Spirit as Captain of the Lord's host, and the issue in view is that of the kingdom, the power and the glory. In other words, it is the rule of the heavens. It is the seat and exercise of Divine authority, it is Lordship. The whole thing there lying ahead is the overthrow and casting out of the entire system of false and evil government in the realm of God. Seven nation's speak of a complete spiritual government that is in opposition to God, and it has to be entirely cast out and the establishment of God's government, God's kingdom, has to take its place. This, then, is the very object for which the Holy Spirit appears on the scene. His interest now, though including many things, is primarily and ultimately the establishment of the throne of God in the realm where the evil rulers and powers have held sway, and that is a key to the whole subject of the Holy Spirit and His advent.

You may take another illustration from the Old Testament, and perhaps with this one we should be sufficed, so far as the Old Testament is concerned. You come to the matter of the monarchy. David is anointed; and you know the anointing always sets forth the coming of the Spirit to commit Himself to a purpose. Here, in the anointing of David, it is in type the Holy Spirit committed to the matter of kingship; the kingdom and the power and the glory. Well, it is not long after the anointing that the antagonism is dragged out into the open. Indeed it follows spontaneously. It always is the case, because of the issue which is bound up with any coming of the Holy Spirit. The primary issue is not some detail of the Holy Spirit's work, but that inclusive purpose of the Holy Spirit to establish the Divine government. So the anointing of David is very quickly followed by an uprising of antagonism, and David finds himself soon after committed to years of terrible conflict because of the anointing: and that clearly indicates that the evil powers recognize what that anointing signifies. It does not signify anything merely as to man. While it might be of concern to the enemy that a man should be holy, that he should be sanctified, or that a man should have this or that spiritual gift, that is not the thing which supremely concerns the enemy. That anointing sets forth the fact that the government is being taken from the enemy and centred somewhere else. That is what precipitates the warfare. Thus David, because of the anointing is thrown into those years of terrible conflict: and there are two things about that which we may recognize to our encouragement.

Two Grounds of Encouragement

One is this, that the very conflict itself which was produced by the antagonism of the Evil One was the very thing which prepared and qualified David for government; and that is true also of the Church.

The second thing is that, where the anointing really does abide, the issue is settled: the government is there, you cannot set it aside. There may be weakness, there may be failure, David may at points break

down; but the anointing abides and he is God's king, and there shall never fail to sit upon the throne of David a king because of the anointing. It is the anointing which is the principle of succession always, and the occupied throne of David for ever and ever is because of the anointing. And where does the anointing rest? Well, upon David's greater Son. That throne has never been vacant because of the anointing. It is the Holy Spirit committed to the throne. Well, there is the Old Testament signification.

The Antagonism of the Enemy

(a) The Assault on our Lord Jesus Christ

When we come to the New Testament, the thing comes right out into the light. The Lord Jesus steps upon the stage of this world's history, the anointing comes upon Him, and immediately the enemy is out, the battle is set, the conflict begins. There are two sides to that. The fact of the anointing drags the enemy out into action always, but the fact of the anointing also commits the anointed to worst him. While the anointing or the Spirit with us will drag the enemy out and we shall be aware that he is against us with all his force, the fact that we have the Spirit commits us to see to it that the kingdom, the power and the glory are God's; that is, we are committed to stand for the rights of God against the challenge of the enemy. We must not let it be a one-sided battle in which the enemy does all the attacking. The anointing commits us to the battle on the surest ground of ultimate triumph. Here, you see, this committing of Himself to the Lord Jesus at the Jordan on the part of the Holy Spirit, means that the issue is joined anew out in the open spiritually with Satan, and the question at issue as ever is this supreme matter of the throne.

Well, that fact is headed right up: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." That is the seat of authority, of government. It is to that seat that the appeal is to be made, and that, as you notice, over against Satan, in his presuming to offer the kingdom to God's Son; a repudiation of Satan by relating the kingdom to the Father. Then, soon after, we have the Lord Jesus showing His own, His Church in representation, the principles of prayer, and, in the light of chapter 4, He teaches them to say, "Bring us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory". Thine! We must be delivered from the enemy in his attempts to get us on to his kingdom line of things and take and maintain our position that the kingdom, the power and the glory are in heaven. The Holy Spirit has that in view.

Well, you see, that follows at once in the temporal realm in the case of the Lord Jesus. Satan has failed in the spiritual realm. He has failed and been defeated in the unseen back of everything. Now he will seek to move through the realm seen, the earthly. Thus we find that Matthew's Gospel heads right up to one issue. The claim of the Lord Jesus to the kingdom is turned against Him as the very case for His destruction. He has claimed to be King of the Jews, He has claimed a kingdom, and subtly oh, we see this subtlety working today in the twisting of things round in propaganda - subtly there is a taking hold of His very claims to the kingdom, and a turning of it against Him - "We have no king but Caesar". Oh, the evil of it; surrendering to something which was utterly false! That was not true. Those Jews would not really in their hearts acknowledge Caesar as their king, but they are willing for anything in lie, in false position, in iniquity, if only this One who claims the kingdom can be destroyed. That is the sort of thing the Devil will do. He stands at nothing. When you come to deal with the evil powers, with the Evil One, you are not dealing with any consideration for truth, any consideration for moral standards. Not at all! That is all flung to the winds. Any lie, any depth of iniquity will do, because of the greatness of the issue. The thing which is at stake is the kingdom, the authority, the throne.

Thus between Christ and the Jews it is the same eternal issue. Where is the Lordship? Where is the throne? Who has it? Satan seeks His destruction because of the anointing. The triumph, you see, over Satan in that last fell, foul, iniquitous act of compromise to destroy the Lord Jesus, is this, that in that very thing the Holy Ghost Himself takes hold and turns it to the supreme triumph over the powers of the enemy, as represented by those words, "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself" (Heb. 9:14). That is another complexion upon the thing altogether! Satan on the outside has brought this King to the Cross, has brought Him under the hand of the murderer, has brought Him to destruction because of this big issue, the throne. But the anointing is there, and the anointing takes hold of this very thing, this Cross, and makes it something altogether other than Satan meant it to be, and, through the eternal Spirit, the Lord Jesus offers Himself without spot to God and there is triumph. But our point now is that the anointing, the Holy Spirit, is all the time committed to the matter of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, committed to the throne.

(b) The Assault on the Church

Well now, from Christ Himself, of course, we can easily follow on and see that this same issue has been behind the history of the Church ever since. It was the issue back of the conflict between the Church and the Roman Empire. It was a question of Christ or Caesar. Where is the authority, where is the throne, where is the government; where is the kingdom, the power, the glory? With Christ or with Caesar? The two cannot co-exist. The conflict between the Church and the Roman Empire was simply the conflict between Satan, and Christ as to the throne. So the conflict started on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in. Again, it is the Spirit committing Himself to this; and what is the supreme note that is sounded forth, that clarion note, on the day of Pentecost?

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet."

And the grand summary of all is: -

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

Everything is headed right up to that. That is the topstone and the battle is joined. The Spirit has done that. That is the Holy Spirit proclaiming aloud the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the Church, and it is not long before you come into the new conflict. The Church meets the implication of that, and the Church's history of suffering and persecution begins and has gone on down the ages; and today, beloved, that is what lies behind the world situation. This is not just a bit of the course of history that finds nations once more locked in war as they have been again and again. No one today can really fail to see that there are great spiritual factors in this. We are all impressed with it. Men who are not spiritually minded men, who are not really discerning in spiritual matters, but who have just a very ordinary sense of things, leading men, during these past few months have been saying that this thing is Satanic. Has not that escaped the lips of many leading men? That is the feeling about it. We have never had it like that before. But what is it? It is the kingdom and the power and the glory. It is the throne; and this thing is intended, back of everything else, to be a blow at the coming, the imminent establishment of the throne of the Lord Jesus.

What I want us to see now is that the Holy Spirit, above all other considerations, is committed to, and concerned with, the throne. Therefore if you and I are at all under the government of the Holy Spirit, it will be in that matter that we shall be mainly exercised. It will be in the matter of the overthrow of the powers of evil, the dethronement of Satan and his system. That will be the object to which the Holy Spirit is working

in us and through us continually, and we must recognize that; because, until we really get on the main thing which the Holy Spirit has in view, we cannot know the fulness of the Spirit. You ask for Pentecost rightly or wrongly, you pray for Pentecost to be repeated. What do people mean when they are praying in that way for another experience of Pentecost? I think we have missed the point. We are after some thing, something to be experienced in the matter of sense, power, demonstration. All sorts of things will happen if only we can get Pentecost again. Revival will come! Such is the common outlook. The Lord open our eyes! While those things may be quite good and may result, that is not the essential meaning of Pentecost. The fulness of the Spirit is related to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, nothing less, and that will find us very much in need of the Holy Spirit because of the intensity of the conflict on that issue.

The Authority of the Name

That means, then, that two things will result from the Holy Spirit being really committed to us. If really the Holy Spirit gets His place and His way, two things will result, will need to result. One is, that we shall have to learn the values of the authority of the Name of Jesus. You notice that came up very quickly at Pentecost. Oh, do get hold of that! From that moment when the Holy Spirit came, the thing upon which the Apostles were moving, acting, challenging, was the Name, the Name of the Lord Jesus. You have seen that, of course. That is no new thought to you, but it will do you good if you underline those early chapters of Acts again at the points where the Name was used. "This name, through faith in his name..." and so on. You and I will have to learn the values of the Name of Jesus anew because it is by means of those values that this precipitated conflict is to be waged to a triumphant issue. I cannot stay now to speak about the power of the Name: that is not my point. I am simply saying that, when the Holy Spirit comes, His object is the throne, the dominion, and for the Church, therefore, by the Holy Spirit, the Name has to be known in its values, its virtues; and you see, you cannot say that Jesus is Lord but by the Spirit. That does not mean that you cannot use the phrase "Jesus is Lord". It is quite clear that the Apostle meant that the spiritual virtue of that declaration requires the Holy Spirit. You cannot, with any spiritual power or value, make the declaration apart from the Holy Ghost; but when you do in the Holy Ghost, something happens all the time.

"God hath highly exalted him, and given him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

It means, beloved, that you stand in the apprehension and appreciation of the exaltation of Christ, and, because you are there, the values of His Name are made effective.

The Testimony to the Lordship of Jesus

The other thing which will arise with the anointing, with the Spirit committing Himself, is that we shall have to stand quite deliberately, positively, on this ground before God against the Evil One that Jesus is Lord, and that stand will be challenged, challenged up to the hilt, challenged in every way, and we shall find that our Ephesian position becomes a necessary one - standing, withstanding, and having done all, to stand. By that I mean that just to take a position will not be enough. We have to act upon the position in resisting every encroachment upon that position - standing! And, when you have done all that, you have still to be found there, holding the ground. It is all a matter of the throne as related to the people of God, as the thing with which you and I, in the eternal counsels of God, are connected. Perhaps as we go on we shall see more how that is so, but here we begin, and our first important thing is to recognize this fact, that the Holy Spirit has one object in view, and all His activities are toward that one object, namely, the establishment of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is what He is after, and if you want the Holy Spirit to operate, to work in

your life and through you, remember it is to that He will work, and it is not always the Holy Spirit's way to give us lovely sensations and beautiful experiences which would bring us into prominence, and make something of us. The Holy Spirit may take us into deep depths in order to get the Lordship of Jesus Christ established, and He will do it in the way which will reach His end best. He will dethrone, He will break down all our strength, our glory and our kingdom. His end is the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost prayer is, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever".

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