

# The Kingdom of Light in Conflict With the Kingdom of Darkness

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the conflict between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, emphasizing the necessity of being born again to enter God's Kingdom and the role of Divine light in spiritual warfare.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1

**Topics:** "Light vs. Darkness", "Conflict of Kingdoms"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the ongoing conflict between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, illustrating how God's sovereign rule is established through His nature as light. He explains that to enter the Kingdom of God, individuals must be reconstituted according to God's nature, which requires a spiritual rebirth. The sermon highlights that the primary work of the devil is to blind the minds of the unbelieving, preventing them from receiving the light of the gospel. Sparks draws on biblical examples, such as Abraham and the Israelites, to show how God's light overcomes darkness throughout history. Ultimately, he calls believers to recognize their role as light in the world, challenging the kingdom of Satan through their very existence.

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## Transcript

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:1-3).

"But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them... Seeing it is God, that said, Let there be light, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 6).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not" (John 1:1, 4-5).

We proceed to consider a little further what the Kingdom of God is. We have seen that from the beginning there has been a great conflict in this universe as to WHO shall have the dominion. The New Testament

speaks of two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the Kingdom of the Son of God's love and the kingdom of that one who wants to usurp the place of God's Son, and all through the history of this world those two kingdoms have been in deadly conflict. As to the Kingdom of God, we have said that it is the sovereign rule of God. We speak of 'entering the Kingdom of God', and in that way we think of the Kingdom of God as being a sphere of God's rule, but there is something about which we must be very clear, although it is not easy to explain.

## GOD RULES BY HIS OWN NATURE

We could think of a kingdom being just a place, and a number of people in that place, and then we could think of some person, a dictator, an autocrat, having dominion in that place over those people. We could say that Egypt is the kingdom of Mr..., and that China is the kingdom of someone else, but that is not the idea of the Kingdom of God. You see, God does not rule just as an autocrat or as a dictator. God's Kingdom is composed of those who are like Himself. That is what it is going to be at the end. The Kingdom is coming now, and when it has fully come it will just be, and only be, people who are like God Himself. I wonder if you understand what I mean when I say that God rules by His own nature? God's government is on the basis of what God is. That is how He is ruling now. When we say: "Thy will be done", we have to go on immediately and say: "As in heaven, so on earth." The Kingdom of God is according to that which satisfies the nature of God.

We have, then, two things to consider. The first is this: that to belong to the Kingdom of God we have to be reconstituted according to God. You know, the door is closed to every man and woman who has not been reconstituted according to God. Let us think of it like this: Someone wants to be in the Kingdom of God and they come to the door, and on that door they see the word: "Cannot." 'You cannot come in here. Something has to happen in you before you can come in here. This realm belongs to people who are altogether different from what you are by nature.'

You remember that the Lord Jesus told a parable of someone who made a great feast, and in order to attend and participate in that feast the guests had to wear a certain garment. Well, the people came with the garments on, but when the master of the feast came to look over the people he found one man without that garment. He said to that man: 'Friend, how did you get in here without the garment on?' In effect he said: 'You have no right here.' The master of the feast said to his servants: 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him out!' It was in that parable that the Lord was expounding this very principle: if you are going to be in the Kingdom of God something has got to happen that makes you suitable for that Kingdom.

Now, of course, you know that I am talking about the third chapter of the Gospel by John. I am quite sure that this man, Nicodemus, would have had an awful shock if he had been told that he was the man without the wedding garment, but this chapter makes it perfectly clear that it was Nicodemus. The only difference between Nicodemus and the man in the feast was that the latter got in and was thrown out, but the unborn-again Nicodemus never got in at all. Now, you note that it was about the Kingdom that Nicodemus was concerned. He was a very religious man, and highly educated, a man held in high esteem amongst the men of this world. Perhaps you would have found no fault with him, but Jesus said to him, without any hesitation: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot ENTER into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Far from being able to ENTER, he cannot even SEE!

There is something about this Kingdom of God that necessitates having an altogether new constitution. We are hearing a great deal in our times about outer space, and we send men into it. Have you seen pictures of those men? You can hardly recognize that they are men! They are so laden with artificial apparatus that you can hardly see them. They have no natural qualification for living in outer space, and have to have artificial lungs. In a sense, they have to be reconstituted upon another principle. That is just an illustration of John chapter 3. Jesus might have said to Nicodemus: 'Nicodemus, if you got into the Kingdom of God you would die. You have not the equipment to live in that rare atmosphere.' That is very simple. If you had to bring a man or a woman whose life is in this world, to whom this world is everything, into a meeting like this, where we are singing these wonderful hymns and talking about these heavenly things, you know, the eyes of that man or that woman would be on the door all the time. They would be wriggling in their seats and saying: 'I will be glad when this is all over and I can get out. Let me get out of this as soon as I can!' You see what I mean? They are not constituted according to the realm of God.

So the Kingdom of God is what God is in His own nature. It is not just a sphere in which God rules as an autocrat. It is the realm in which God's nature is expressed. Peter spoke about His "precious and exceeding great promises through which ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and that is only another way of speaking about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now we come to the real message for now.

#### THE KINGDOM OF GOD THE RULE OF DIVINE LIGHT

What is God like? If the Kingdom of God is the realm where God's nature rules, this opens a door to very many things. I only want to speak of one of those things now, but it is a matter of fundamental importance. It is the matter which just went to the heart of Nicodemus' case. The Scripture says: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), so the Kingdom of God is the rule of Divine light, but Divine light has always been a focal point of intense conflict.

The Bible opens with a conflict. There is a state of things in nature which God attacks - He begins to make a tremendous assault upon a condition of things, and the first attack of God was upon darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep", and I do not think that God just looked at that darkness and in a very soft voice said: 'Let us have some light.' I believe that there was an angry look on His face and He said: 'Let light be! This is a situation that I never intended to exist and which I will not tolerate. It is a contradiction to My very nature.' So the Divine fiat was uttered in a strong voice: "Let there be light!" Do you think I am reading something into the story? No, I have the whole Bible behind me to support what I am saying. That is why I gave you 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, and if you can listen to the tone in the voice of the Apostle Paul when he is saying those words, you would not find anything very meek and mild - "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving LEST the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should dawn upon them." This darkness is the work of the devil, and God is against it.

I repeat that the first attack of God was made upon darkness, and the natural is a parable of the spiritual. You know that throughout the whole Bible redemption is centred in light, as the redemption of the natural earth was by light. The first phase of the redemption of the earth was by reason of warfare against darkness, or light overcoming darkness.

You can take up that principle right through your Bible. I can only touch on a few points now. We were hearing about Abraham this morning, and Abraham was another movement of God's rule concerning His Kingdom, and that new movement in redemption was on the basis of light. Our brother called it vision, but

it is the same thing. Light is vision, and vision is light. It was left to the great martyr Stephen to tell us how this happened: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia" - if you like, "when he was in darkness" - (Acts 7:2). The God of glory APPEARED, showed Himself. Abraham had his eyes opened to see the God of glory, and all the great redemptive work of God went forward through Abraham on that basis. It was a marvellous illumination! Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see MY day" (John 8:56). What a light Abraham came into! He was a great key to the whole plan of redemption.

You leap over a few centuries and you see the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, in the darkness of Egypt. If you want to see what God thinks and feels about darkness, look at the ten judgments upon Egypt! God entered into a tremendous warfare with the darkness of Egypt, and that phase of the warfare headed right up to this: on that fatal night for Egypt, in all the deadly darkness, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. The first-born sons of Egypt died in the darkness, but the first-born sons of God went out in the light. And that was not the end. All the way through the wilderness journey, in the darkness of the night there was a pillar of fire, and that light above them was in warfare against the darkness around them. They were redeemed from being lost in the wilderness by the pillar of fire, the light in the darkness.

Now, how much of the Old Testament am I to employ to show you how true this was? The Prophets were centres of light in the darkness of the people of God to redeem them from their darkness. If you take Isaiah alone, what an example he is of this very thing! His great ministry took its rise from: "I saw the Lord... high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:2). Again and again he spoke about the darkness and the light, and at last, with a vision beyond, he cried: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come" (60:1).

I want to get this right home. All that is truth which may be objective, but let us come back to this: There is a tremendous conflict between these two kingdoms of light and darkness. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we are brought right to the very work of the devil: "The god of this world hath blinded." What, then, is THE supreme work of the devil? It is not that he makes good men bad men, nor that he drags good men down into the mire of sin, nor that he brings strong young men and beautiful young women down into moral corruption, nor makes atheists and infidels. Those are only by-products. They are the results of something else, and that is: "The god of this world hath BLINDED." Remove their blindness, open their eyes, and these things will be dealt with quite simply. The work of the devil is to keep people in the dark. Light is the most fatal thing to the kingdom of Satan; he fears light more than he fears anything else. He is the "prince of darkness". He has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, and why has he done so? It is a precaution against something, and one little word explains it: "LEST the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine." 'If those people get the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, MY kingdom is gone. The battle is over for me. I am lost.' So that Satan will do anything to keep us from having light.

There is a real touch of genius in Bunyan's "Holy War". Satan and his kingdom are making their assault upon Mansoul in order to capture it - the city of Mansoul is besieged by the powers of darkness. Satan says to his captains: 'There is one man that you must capture. If we capture that one man the city is ours. Focus all your attention upon the Lord Mayor!' What is the name of the Lord Mayor? His name is Mr. Understanding. 'When you have captured Mr. Understanding put him down in a dark dungeon so that he does not know what is happening. The rest of the battle will be easy.' That is the genius of John Bunyan, but where did he get it? He got it from Paul. Do you remember this little phrase of Paul's: "Being darkened in their understanding" (Ephesians 4:18)? Paul is speaking there about all the moral evils of the Gentile world, and he says they are due to one thing: their understanding is darkened.

Now, dear friends, you perhaps wonder why I am speaking to you like this. You may say: 'Well, we are not in the dark. We are saved people.' I will ask you to explain one thing to me: Why is it that invariably when we are going to have a conference where the Lord is going to give more light, we have to come to it through so much conflict? That is quite true of this very conference. All kinds of things arose to get in the way. But that is only a simple example of a great truth.

We have spoken of the prophets, and they were points of light in the darkness of Israel. Will you tell me that they were not in a conflict? Because they were points of light they were points of the most vicious assault of the evil powers. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and every day and everywhere Jesus was in conflict because He was a light. It was true of the apostles. Wherever they went, even without beginning to preach, they found themselves in conflict. It is as though the devil and his powers said: 'We will not have this in our kingdom!', and they will stop at nothing to quench the light. And the Lord says: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Here is the challenge. Divine light is POSITIVE. You cannot have Divine light and be neutral. If God has shined into your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, your life is a challenge to the kingdom of Satan, and his attitude to you will be: 'We will get you out as soon as we can!' You will find that Satan will stop at nothing to quench that light. You see, Divine light is not just teaching and theory; it is a menace to the kingdom of Satan. Are we in the Kingdom of God? That is what it means. Individual Christians are to be like that - their very existence disturbs the kingdom of Satan.

And what is true of the individual is true of the little companies of the Lord's people. Satan does not mind you organizing communities of people called Christians. I don't think he troubles about them very much, for the simple reason that they don't trouble him, but if any little company of the Lord's people anywhere are really in the light and are focal points of the significance of Jesus Christ, Satan will do everything to destroy that little company.

I must add this as I close. Remember that this is not only an initial matter in the Christian life. Every fresh step of advance in the spiritual life is the result of some new light. We only make progress in the spiritual life by more and more Divine light, and the evil one does not want us to advance to the fullness of light. As soon as we think we have got all the light, then death will set in.

Well, I must leave it there for the present.

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