

# My Kingdom is Not of This World

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please take your Bibles once more and turn to the book of John, the Gospel of John, in chapter 18. John chapter 18, and I will read from verse 33 through to verse 38.

Here, Jesus is before the governor, Pontius Pilate. John chapter 18, verse 33. This is the word of God. Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, Are you the king of the Jews?

Is that your own idea, Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me? Am I a Jew? Pilate replied. It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me.

What is it you have done? Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews.

But now my kingdom is from another place. You are a king then, said Pilate. Jesus answered, You are right in saying I am a king.

[ 1 : 17 ] In fact, for this reason I was born. And for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

What is truth? Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, I find no basis for charge against him. Amen. My kingdom is not of this world, Jesus says.

To be clear, Governor Pilate wasn't the only one confused by this. The Jewish leaders who brought Jesus to him did not understand who Jesus was or what he was doing.

They did not understand the nature of his kingdom. Even the Lord's own disciples did not yet understand the nature of his kingdom.

And we'll start with them. We see their confusion at the beginning of this chapter. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus the previous night, Peter responds by drawing out his sword and cutting off one of the men's ears.

[ 2 : 29 ] He did what seems perfectly reasonable to him. He knew it wasn't right for Jesus to be arrested. He knew that Jesus was innocent of all charges they might bring against him.

So what was he supposed to do? Should he just stand there and watch the injustice unfold? No, he thought. I have to stop this. I can't let them do what they're about to do.

It isn't right. He didn't understand yet. Jesus had been telling his disciples that he must suffer and die.

When he said this in Matthew 16, Peter had a very similar response. He said, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you. As the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Good intentions or not, Peter's refusal to let Christ fulfill the plan and to die was evil. It was demonic. And that's why Jesus rebuked him sharply in that moment, saying, Get behind me, Satan.

[ 3 : 39 ] You are a hindrance to me. You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Peter, you're letting your thoughts be influenced by the devil, who wants nothing more than to stop this from happening.

Sentimentality does not carry more weight than the plan of God. You have to let me go to the cross. And when Jesus is arrested, Peter has the same impulse as before.

I've got to stop this. It isn't right. And once again, Jesus corrects him. The rebuke isn't as sharp, but he says to Peter, Put your sword in its sheath.

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Peter, it's time. I have to do this. You have to let me go. And you'll understand why soon enough.

Why do you suppose Peter struggled so much with this? Jesus told him the plan over and over again.

[ 4 : 47 ] This is the plan. I must suffer and die. I suppose sentimentality could have been part of it. They loved Jesus. They did not want to see him suffer.

They did not want to see him die. But I think it's more than that. I believe they had fundamental misunderstandings about the Messiah and about his kingdom.

And they weren't the only ones. This was true for most of the Jews in Israel. This is why Scripture says he was in the world. And the world was made through him.

And yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. These are the very people given the oracles of God.

The very people who studied the prophecies throughout their lives. The very people who were excitedly looking for the Messiah's coming. And then when he arrived, they took one look at him and thought, this can't be him.

[ 5 : 54 ] No, that's not him. Now, Peter and the other disciples believed it was him. You are the Christ, Peter confessed.

The son of the living God. Another time he said, you have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and we know that you are the holy one of God.

We know. And yet, even they were confused about what he was doing. But why? Well, briefly, let's consider what they knew from the scriptures.

What did the Old Testament say? Genesis 49.10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

A king is coming. Wait for him. Psalm 2. Psalm 2. As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

[ 7 : 04 ] I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, you are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Not only is a king coming, but he will rule over all the earth, every nation. Daniel 2.44 And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.

So every other kingdom on this earth will be swallowed up by this new kingdom. And not only that, but this new kingdom will never fall. This will be an eternal kingdom that will stand forever and ever. And what will this kingdom be like? Isaiah 25 says, On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine.

[ 8 : 22 ] And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all the peoples, the veil that is spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death forever.

And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. This is a tremendous promise. The people will be filled and they will be satisfied.

There will be immense joy in the land. The curse of sin, well, that will be completely undone. No more tears. No more death. And then as we continue reading the prophecies of the Old Testament, we learn that this new kingdom will experience nothing but peace with God's Son, the Messiah, reigning forever.

Of course, all of this sounds amazing, especially to a people who are currently controlled and to some degree oppressed by their enemies. The people of Israel could hardly wait for the Messiah. They knew what Scripture said was in store for them. So what was the problem? Here in John 18, the Jews are not celebrating Christ.

[ 9 : 41 ] They certainly are not worshiping Him as they should have. Instead, they have dragged Him before the Roman government, their enemies, mind you, and are demanding His execution.

Pilate asks, Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews? No, they shouted.

We would rather you release a convicted murderer, thief, and insurrectionist than this man, Jesus. Of course, if we're trying to explain why the Jews reacted this way, we could simply point to their hardness of heart.

In Mark 3, we're told that Jesus looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. They were willfully ignorant. They were stubborn.

They refused to see the truth, though He was standing right in front of them. But that doesn't really explain Peter or the other disciples.

[ 10 : 49 ] Why were they so confused about Jesus and what He was doing? Again, Christ told them the plan and Peter rejected it. Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you.

And here in John 18, he's physically, forcefully trying to prevent it from happening. Well, I read some of the prophecies from the Old Testament regarding this coming King and His kingdom. Now, if you had been a Jew in the first century and you had seen this Jesus, this humble carpenter's son from Nazareth, who seemed to run away from His adoring crowds at times even when they wanted to make Him their king, what would you have thought?

He seemed to check some of the boxes, but He seemed to fall woefully short of others. Isn't He supposed to, you know, storm into Jerusalem, take the throne of David, conquer all of Israel's enemies and establish His everlasting kingdom?

I mean, He showed throughout His ministry that He has the power to do it, but then He pulls back, if you will. And instead of storming into Jerusalem, here He has led a band of soldiers at the behest of the Jews, no less, His people march Him to His death.

[ 12 : 21 ] How were the disciples supposed to make sense of this? Well, the prophecies actually predicted more than a conquering king, they also spoke of a suffering servant.

We could turn to many places, but I think Isaiah 53 should suffice. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as one from whom men hide their faces.

He was despised and we esteemed Him not. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds we are healed.

It was the will of the Lord to crush Him. He has put Him to grief. It was all right there in the pages of Scripture. So what was the problem?

Well, I think we can point to at least two things. First, no one knew how to reconcile these depictions of Christ. How can He be a conquering king and a suffering servant?

[ 13 : 38 ] How can He suffer and die when He's supposed to rise up and take control of the whole earth? Well, in hindsight, we understand that they were conflating His first coming and His second coming.

He was the suffering servant during His first advent and He will most certainly be the conquering king when He returns. But second, they struggled to see or maybe I should say they struggled to understand what they could not see.

You see, for all of human history, all of human history, kingdoms, nations, and empires have come into existence in the exact same way. It is through the use of force, of power, of dominance.

One people group conquers another, governments are formed, militaries are established, alliances are made, political maneuvering is usually involved. It's survival of the fittest.

The strongest group survives. They form the nations. They create the kingdoms and the empires of this earth. And that's what everyone knows. And that is perhaps why Peter grabs his sword when Jesus' future reign seems to be put into jeopardy.

[ 14 : 58 ] What else could he do? It's time to fight, he thought. The time has come to rise up and to show our strength by bearing arms against anyone who would stand against Christ's kingdom.

In his mind, he's thinking the plan will not be thwarted. And every kingdom that has ever been established has taken the same path. Eventually, it needs soldiers who are willing to literally fight for the kingdom and for its king.

Right? But Jesus stops him. Peter, put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

Now, as you can see, he doesn't offer his disciples any further explanation at this point. It's not until he's standing before Pilate that he says, my kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from this world.

[ 16 : 08 ] You see, everyone involved had the wrong idea about the Lord's kingdom. At least the timing of it. The disciples, they were waiting for Christ to establish a physical kingdom here on this earth during his first coming.

Even after his death. Do you remember what they asked him just before his ascension? Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? We get it now, Lord.

You had to die and rise again. So, is now the time? And Jesus says, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

In short, no, it wasn't the time. Not exactly. As for the Jewish leaders, they too were anticipating a physical king or a physical kingdom, I should say.

But unlike the disciples, they did not believe Jesus would be its king. They rejected that notion.

When they arrested Jesus, the kingdom was the furthest things from their mind.

[ 17 : 15 ] However, we do see they used his talk about the kingdom to accomplish what they wanted. They wanted Jesus executed because they considered him a blasphemer.

He claimed to be God and he claimed to do things only God can do such as forgive sins and worst of all for them, people believed him. But they couldn't exactly take that charge to the Romans.

Why would Rome care about a single man within their vast empire who only offense seems to be that he claims to be the son of Israel's God?

The Roman leaders would have laughed them right out of the court. So, according to Luke's gospel, they tell Pilate, we found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ a king.

Now, the first part of their statement was a bald-faced lie. The Pharisees once explicitly asked Jesus, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

[ 18 : 31 ] And Jesus replied, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. If you owe taxes to Rome, by all means, pay your taxes to Rome.

There's no conflict in that. But it's the second part of their accusation that was meant to get Pilate's attention. He's been trying to convince people he's a king.

And that was true. But not in the way they imply. So when Jesus appears before Pilate, Pilate asks, are you the king of the Jews?

Is that your claim? Are you leading some kind of uprising? Are you a revolutionary? Are you an insurrectionist?

Are you rebelling against Rome? What's your story? And skipping ahead, Jesus answers, my kingdom is not of this world.

[ 19 : 34 ] Now Pilate immediately recognizes what Jesus is implying here. So you are a king, he asks. Whether it's of this world or not, to say you have a kingdom is to say you are a king.

And yes, Jesus is a king. He's the king of kings. But that doesn't mean the Jews charge against him is legitimate.

Jesus again says, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not from this world. It's not of this world. It's not from this world. It's so unlike any of the kingdoms of this world that my servants, despite Peter's initial impulse, my servants have done nothing to stop their king from being arrested and executed.

So no, Jesus is not leading a revolt against the Roman Empire. He's not an insurrectionist. He never committed an act of treason. The disciples know this, yet they're still confused a little bit about how Jesus is going to take them from not having a kingdom to having a physical kingdom.

[ 20 : 54 ] So as far as the disciples are concerned, they're left merely waiting to see what happens. The Jewish leaders, they know he's not an insurrectionist, but they've lied about it because they want Pilate to crucify him.

And Pilate, well, Pilate is left scratching his head not knowing what to think. He doesn't seem to believe the charge against Jesus. More than once, he says, I find no guilt in him.

He may be crazy, I don't know, but I don't think he's a traitor. In the end, however, he feels he has to appease the Jews and he gives them what they want.

He signs off on the crucifixion of Jesus. So what does Jesus mean when he says, my kingdom is not of this world?

Perhaps the first question that naturally arises from this statement is, Lord, how can your kingdom not be of this world? Isn't this your world?

[ 22 : 05 ] you created it. It's under your sovereign control. The people, the nations, the earth, this all belongs to you. And that's true.

For God is the king of all the earth, Psalm 47 says. But Jesus is talking about something else here. You might say he's making a distinction between his rule over creation and his kingdom in terms of redemption, creation versus redemption.

When Jesus began his public ministry, he proclaimed, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Now, obviously, he wasn't talking about God's sovereign rule over creation.

God never ceased to be the sovereign ruler over creation. Instead, Jesus is pointing to what we might call a progressive, unfolding dimension of God's kingdom, namely, his redemptive kingdom. So maybe think of it like this. God established his perfect kingdom on the earth in creation. The Garden of Eden was his kingdom. If you were looking at that time at the globe from space, all you would see is white, a brilliant white covering the entire earth.

[ 23 : 37 ] But then, Adam sinned. And suddenly, the earth turns black. Now, I'm going to skip a lot of details and jump straight to the Gospels.

The Old Testament continually reminded the people that God would eventually bring back his kingdom. He would redeem the earth. He would turn it from black to white again.

And when Jesus arrives, he creates this one bright spot on the globe. The Gospel of John says, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

The entire earth is black, if you will, but as Jesus moves from place to place in Israel, he's creating this little bright white spot wherever he goes.

And that light doesn't stop with him as he moves. And the hearts of the people are regenerated as Christ brings more and more people into the kingdom born again by his spirit.

[ 24 : 42 ] You start to see these additional white spots popping up. One here and another there. Every new member of the kingdom represents the kingdom as it grows and it multiplies.

New little lights are popping up all over Israel and eventually they would pop up well beyond Israel. Jump ahead to the year 2024 and the entire globe is filled with these little white dots.

There's still a lot of darkness mind you. But the bright spots are everywhere in every nation. And Jesus said this would happen.

In Matthew 13, he said his kingdom was like a wheat field. Weeds and wheat growing up in the same place.

And when you look at the map there's no clear borders around the two groups. They seem to be intermingled on this earth. In another parable Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

[ 25 : 48 ] It is the smallest of all seeds but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

His kingdom will grow and grow and grow. And then he said the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till all was leavened.

You see as the kingdom grows it permeates the earth it cuts through the darkness all over the place. Now to be clear we won't see the fullness of Christ's kingdom until Christ returns.

Yes it's growing and it is permeating the earth but Jesus says it is still among the weeds and it will remain among the weeds until the end of the age when he says the son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

[ 27 : 06 ] So when Jesus says his kingdom is not of this world he isn't denying that it will one day be a physical kingdom on this earth. And he isn't denying that it exists in the material world right now at least in part.

It is here. But what he is saying is that his kingdom as it stands is very much a spiritual kingdom that does not operate like any other kingdom.

He is telling Pilate specifically that his kingdom is not really a threat to Pilate's kingdom. It is not yet what the disciples had in mind.

It is not at all what the Jews implied it was and it was not what Pilate assumed it might be. You see everything about the Lord's kingdom in this present age is radically different from every kingdom on this earth.

For example it doesn't expand through force or military might. It doesn't utilize any form of violence. Jesus says as much to Pilate here verse 37 for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth.

[ 28 : 26 ] Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Clearly Pilate has no idea what he's talking about. What is truth he asks.

And frankly we shouldn't be surprised by his response. In John 3 Jesus says unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

He won't understand it. He can't begin to see the nature of this kingdom. So how does this spiritual kingdom expand?

How does it grow? How does it permeate the world? Well it does so by advancing the truth. As Jesus says here. So it expands when his disciples heed their calling to be witnesses to the truth out in this lost and broken world.

Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28 all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you until the end of the age.

[ 29 : 54 ] Notice that number one Jesus has all authority. He is reigning over his kingdom though he is presently reigning from heaven.

And number two his kingdom advances as the gospel goes forward and disciples are made. Those believers born of his spirit are entering the kingdom one by one regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

It's not a physical border that's expanding but the kingdom is growing. New bright spots are appearing all over the globe wherever the gospel is preached and believed.

And number three Jesus tells his disciples that the nature of the kingdom really will not change until the end of the age.

This is how it will be until Christ returns. So Christ's kingdom does not expand in the way that other kingdoms do.

[ 31 : 02 ] It's not limited to a geographical location. It has no borders. The seat of government is not even on this earth. It's in heaven. Its citizens live in all parts of the earth.

One does not become a citizen by natural birth. And there is no other nation or nations. capable of overthrowing this kingdom.

This is what Jesus means when he says my kingdom is not of this world. It cannot compare. It is radically, radically different. And let's think for a moment about its citizens.

What are they like? Well, according to Jesus in Matthew 5, they are poor in spirit. they are meek.

They hunger and thirst for righteousness. They are merciful. They are pure in heart. They are peacemakers. According to Paul in Romans 12, and we can turn to many places, they abhor what is evil and they hold fast to what is good.

[ 32 : 14 ] They outdo one another in showing honor. They contribute to the needs of others and they always seek to show hospitality. They do not curse even those who persecute them.

They do everything they can to live peaceably with all. You see, everything about Christ's kingdom is upside down according to the world standards or right side up depending on how you look at it. so if nothing else, we can understand why everyone, everyone felt so much confusion about Jesus and what he was doing.

But here's the thing, even with our hindsight, even with all of the teachings of the New Testament available to us, we can still be confused about the nature of Christ's kingdom.

And this confusion leads people to take actions that Christ our king never intended for us. For example, have you ever heard of Anthony the Great?

[ 33 : 25 ] Perhaps there's been more than one throughout history, I'm not sure. But around A.D. 270, Anthony the Great, as he was known, heard a sermon on Matthew 19 where Jesus says to the rich young ruler, if you would be perfect, go and sell what you possess, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Now, Anthony interprets this as meaning he should give away every material thing he owns and sacrifice every possible comfort in this world, move into the desert and live in isolation for the remainder of his life, waiting, until he can finally enter the kingdom of heaven.

And really, it wasn't long before thousands of others followed him out into the Egyptian desert. Now, more than misinterpreting a single verse, Anthony seems to have been motivated to completely separate himself from the world because, as Christ said, his kingdom is not of this world.

Anthony thought, therefore, I should not be of this world. So, I will escape this world as much as humanly possible.

I often joke that I intend to pack up my family and move us to Zambia. We'll live in some remote village somewhere. As you know, the west in more ways than one seems to be crumbling all around us.

[ 35 : 03 ] So, it's tempting to think, let's just flee this place. Let's go live in isolation somewhere. And that's a temptation born, at least in part, out of not understanding the nature of Christ's kingdom.

Isolation is the temptation. We think, if Christ's kingdom is not of this world, if Christ's kingdom is a spiritual, heavenly kingdom, then I don't need to care about this world, do I?

And it's that kind of thinking that has led people to quit their jobs or move into communes and really do everything they can to detach and remove themselves from ordinary society.

But that's a tragic misunderstanding of Christ's kingdom. In fact, turn back one chapter to John 17. John 17.

In verse 15, Jesus prays for his disciples and says, I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

[ 36 : 21 ] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Just as Christ and his kingdom are not of the world, citizens of his kingdom are not of the world.

Yet, the Lord's very specific, very intentional prayer is that God the Father not take us out of the world. Why?

Well, he has a reason for us to stay. We're not like the rest of the world, of course. Our very nature is different. We have minds that are fixed on the kingdom to come, not the present kingdoms of this world, but the Lord has a reason for us to remain in the thick of this world, to stay among the weeds until he returns or calls us home.

In Acts chapter 1, when the disciples asked, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom? And Jesus said, it is not for you to know times or season. He went on to say, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and to the end of the earth.

If nothing else, we are left in this world to be ambassadors to the dying kingdoms of this world. We are left in this world to tell them about our eternal heavenly kingdom.

[ 37 : 57 ] We are left to tell them about our glorious king. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, we are left in this world so that God can make his appeal through us, imploring the world on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.

In short, we should care deeply about the world. We should care deeply about the world. We should care deeply about the world. Not attempt to escape from it. But isolation.

Isolation isn't our only temptation. Another extreme that often tempts us is assimilation. And this can come in various forms.

You see, we live in this world, right? This is where we were born. This is where we grow up. This is where we work. We get married. We raise our families.

This is the world we know. So the temptation is to become so focused on this world that we lose sight of the one to come.

[ 39 : 06 ] The apostle Peter says believers are sojourners and exiles in this world. We're out of place here because for those believers born of his spirit, this is no longer our home.

We're citizens of heaven. We're here for a while anyway. But this place is not meant for us. We're just passing through. In Philippians 3, Paul writes, So while unbelievers, unsurprisingly, fix their minds on this world, citizens of Christ's kingdom fix their minds on another, that is, the heavenly kingdom.

Elsewhere, Paul writes, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

In 1 Corinthians 7, he puts it this way, The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.

[ 41 : 16 ] For the present form of this world is passing away. To be clear, Paul is not suggesting we deny reality, but to set our minds on things above is to recognize the fleeting nature of this world.

This is all very transient. It's temporary. Now, I know that while we're in the thick of life, it all feels so substantial, so permanent, but it's not.

The world in this present form is passing away. In the grand scheme, it's little more than a mist. Even so, it is incredibly easy for us to lose sight of that. It's easy to lose sight of Christ and His kingdom, and when that happens, we quickly become way too invested in this world. Yes, we are in this world. Yes, we have great responsibilities here, and yes, we should be engaged with this world, but we should not invest too heavily in this world. [ 42 : 24 ] You might say we shouldn't let our roots grow too deep here. And along these lines, we must be careful to avoid becoming like this world.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Again, assimilation is the temptation. Assimilation. Assimilation. We're in the world, and we're prone to think like the world, and to behave like the world. But the Lord has called us to be very different from the world, because we are no longer of the world. The world says pride is a virtue. The Bible says humility is a virtue. The world prizes self-sufficiency. The Bible calls on us to depend on God for everything. The world values ambition for power, and Christ commands us to serve. The world is always telling us to strive for more and more and more, and the Bible says be content, no matter how little you have. [ 43 : 37 ] Again, Christ's kingdom is entirely upside down according to worldly standards. And yet, it is so easy to conform.

It is so easy to prioritize the here and now and invest in it as though this is our permanent home. On a personal level, we might spend too much of our time and attention on pursuing wealth or career success.

We want more money, a bigger house, a nicer car. We want to make investments that show large returns down the road. We chase after comfort and security. Meanwhile, Jesus is asking us, what will it profit if a man gains the whole world? If he forfeits his soul. Or we might think of the man who built his own personal kingdom. And he said to himself, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink, be merry. You've got it made. You've essentially created for yourself heaven on earth. But what happened? Fool, God said.

[ 44 : 50 ] This night, your soul is required of you. And the things you've prepared, whose will they be? Now, we also face this temptation on a national level, don't we?

As I mentioned before, we're watching the West crumble right before our eyes. The United States in particular. Every time we look at the news, things seem to get worse and worse. And that's usually when I say, hey, are we moving to Zambia yet? Specifically, our culture seems to be moving further and further away from God and any semblance of righteousness. In fact, the culture is growing increasingly hostile toward the church. And this has led many to feel that impulse to do as Peter did and to fight back.

No, this is not what the country is supposed to be, so let's take it back by any means necessary. For Christ's sake, let's take it back. I was thinking about this recently, and as I often do, I sat down to try and articulate my thoughts on paper.

[ 45 : 57 ] And I'll read just a paragraph of what I wrote. The impulse is to preserve what we know as the West. I'll read that again.

The impulse to preserve what we know as the West feels at times as though it's woven into the very fabric of who we are. We cling to the ideals of democracy, liberty, and the rule of law like a drowning man clings to a life preserver, desperate, frantic, and more than a little panicked. But I wonder, as I clutch these values to my chest, if I'm not holding on to the wrong thing altogether. The problem isn't with the ideals themselves. They are, after all, drawn from the deep well of Judeo-Christian ethics.

The trouble begins when we start confusing the preservation of the West with the advancement of Christ's kingdom as though saving one were synonymous with serving the other. It's easy to conflate the two. This has been a temptation of the church throughout history. We're not the first to experience this.

[ 47 : 07 ] The world has always been antithetical to Christ's kingdom. And the church has always longed to see the world brought into submission of Christ our Lord.

For the glory of God and for our own peace, we would love to see a genuinely Christian nation. We would love to live in a genuinely Christian nation. And the church has, at times, tried to make that happen through politics and sometimes violence.

Unsurprisingly, the consequences were usually devastating, even if unintended. Psalm 146 reminds us, put not your trust in princes.

We might say governments or political movements. In whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. And on that very day, his plans perish.

There's a reason Jesus and his apostles never launched a political revolution to speak of. They didn't talk politics. They didn't discuss strategies to change the world's culture.

[ 48 : 19 ] They didn't dole out career advice or, you know, provide some sort of seven-step program for building your financial portfolio. There's a reason they lived modestly, though never in isolation.

There's a reason they devoted their lives and sacrificed everything necessary for the gospel and for building up the church.

Because in the end, every government will topple. Every society will disappear and every dollar will be gone. But Christ's kingdom will last forever.

and the righteous will shine like the sun in that kingdom. So to the believers here, I will summarize things by saying Christ's kingdom is not of this world, but we do have work to do while we're here.

We are ambassadors of a kingdom that will never fall. We are subjects of a king who will reign forever. His kingdom is our priority. And it's a kingdom that grows not by force or by power or military might, but by the gospel.

[ 49 : 37 ] It advances when hearts are changed and sinners are saved because the truth of Christ is proclaimed. Because we are living out our calling to be light and salt in a dark and broken world.

and for those who have not yet bowed the knee to our king, I'll remind you again that this world is passing away and the kingdom of Christ is coming in its fullness and when it comes, it'll be too late to enter.

The king will return and he will gather his people to himself, but those who have rejected him will be cast out into the outer darkness. So today, today is the day of salvation.

Come to him now and enter his kingdom before it's too late. He offers you eternal life and a place in this everlasting kingdom if only you will repent and believe.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world, but it is most certainly for this world. Let's pray.

[ 50 : 55 ] Father, we thank you for your eternal kingdom and for calling us to be a part of it. Forgive us when we become distracted by the things of this world and help us to seek first your kingdom and righteousness.

Strengthen us to be faithful witnesses of your gospel proclaiming the truth of Christ to a world in need. And for those who have not yet turned to Christ, we pray that your spirit would open their hearts and lead them to repentance and faith.

Lord, keep us longing for the return of our king and help us to live faithfully until that day. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.