

Two Kingdoms

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[0:00] Verses 9 through 14. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you, and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Something very interesting happens when you get on the highway on US 31 and take it around South Bend and just keep going north a few miles, and suddenly the laws change, and the sales tax actually goes down, believe it or not.

The police change, and they won't let me vote anymore. And you might ask what's happening, and of course you're moving from one kingdom, so to speak, the kingdom of Indiana, into a different kingdom, the kingdom of Michigan.

[1:45] There's a line. There's a line on the earth. If I'm on one side, I'm in Indiana. I'm in one kingdom. If I'm on the other side, I'm in a different kingdom.

And this evening there is a line that runs around and around in this sanctuary. And it goes between seats.

It goes between husbands and wives sometimes, between parents and children. And one person is on one side, and another person, could be sitting right next to them, is on another side.

And if you drew a spiritual map of this congregation, you would see that there's just two kingdoms here. There's just two kingdoms. The kingdom of light and the dominion of darkness.

We read about them in the passage. And there's only two. There's no third. There's no neutral.

There's nothing in between. You are either in one or you are in the other.

[2:51] So where do you live? What is your spiritual address? What kingdom do you belong to? And there's not a more important question in all the world, because heaven and earth, or heaven and hell, hang on it.

Life and death, hang on it. Where you will spend forever and ever is answered in that question of what kingdom I am in right now.

And so tonight I want to look at these two kingdoms. And I want to see what they're like. And then I want to answer a very important question, and that question is, what if I don't like the kingdom I'm in?

How can I move and change kingdoms? And then we're going to have some points to take home, five points that you can take home with you.

And so first, what are these kingdoms like? What are these kingdoms like? What is it like being in the kingdom of darkness? What is it like being in the kingdom of light, in the kingdom of God's Son?

[3:57] Well, let's talk about, first of all, the kingdom of darkness. That is where we all begin.

Remember, Paul is thanking God the Father because he has rescued you from the dominion of darkness, and he has brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

He's rescued you from the dominion of darkness. That's where we begin. That's where we are born into the scene. Adam brought us into this condition.

So what is it like? Well, it's dark. It's dark. It's dark. It's where darkness reigns. God is light.

And in him there is no darkness. But Satan lives in darkness. And so this kingdom is a kingdom that is separated, separate from God, cut off from God. So in him there's no darkness.

But this kingdom is characterized. It is darkness itself. It's an opposition to God. It's to live apart from God. It's to live not knowing God. And so in this kingdom, in the dominion of darkness, the rules, the policies, the procedures, the wisdom, the thinking, the plans, they're all decided without God in view.

[5:13] God is never brought to bear into making any of these decisions. The fool says in his heart, there is no God. So the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of darkness, is a kingdom cut off from God.

It's a kingdom under the wrath of God. Darkness in the Bible is used to describe God being under God's wrath.

And so this kingdom is built on the suburbs of hell itself. And so there is the city of hell. And there are the millions and millions of souls who have lived their lives.

And they've rebelled against God. They've gone their own way. And they've died. And now they've entered into the city. They're streaming into this great dark city.

The Bible calls it outer darkness. Outer darkness. No chance of light. But before you get to the outer darkness, people live in the kingdom of darkness.

[6:14] It, like that outer darkness, is under the wrath of God. So everything done in the kingdom of darkness is cursed. Their best things turn against them.

Their best works, their best righteousness is filthy rags. Their blessings are turned to curses. Their joys are turned to sorrow. Their pleasures turned to destroy them.

And in the kingdom of darkness, the very first waves of that lake of fire spit up on shore. The first taste of hell is tasted here.

Death, disease, hardship, crime, hatred, folly, confusion, cruelty, ruthlessness. All of the hell of men's hearts are felt and experienced and lived out first here.

It's a kingdom under the curse and the wrath of God. And it's a kingdom where ignorance reigns. To be in the dark.

[7:23] We have that saying. They're in the dark. They don't know what's going on. And so, go out. You've seen these pictures where people fly over in the Amazon jungle. And you go out there to the poorest tribesmen in the rainforest.

And they're bowing down to their gods. They're chasing the airplanes with their bow and arrows. They think, who knows what it is. And we say, how silly they are. How foolish. They have no idea what they're missing.

They don't know what's outside of the border of their rainforest. How ignorant they are. How blind to reality. They have no idea what they're missing. That's the kingdom of darkness.

Ignorance. Blind to God's plans. Blind to God's glory. Blind to the glory of Jesus Christ. Blind to the goodness of God.

Blind to what life is really all about. In their wisdom, they've become fools. And they wonder. And they laugh.

[8:22] Why don't you join us in our fun? And they chalk it up to all sorts of things. They think we're afraid. They think we're holier than thou.

But they can't imagine that we have a totally different way of thinking. We have totally different desires. It can never enter into their imagination that we don't care about those things.

Those things do not please us anymore. We have better things. Things that we experience in the kingdom of light that they do not have. And so they're blind. The darkness has blinded them.

And so this is a kingdom shrouded in ignorance. And it's hopeless. It's a kingdom marked by hopelessness. The Bible uses darkness to describe hopeless situations.

So Psalm 107. Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom. Prisoners suffering in iron chains. For they had rebelled against the words of God.

[9:24] So imagine a prisoner in the dungeon. They've taken the key. They've locked you up. They've thrown away the key. And it's not a 20-year sentence.

It's not, well, there might be reduced time for good behavior. There is no hope. You are on death row. The last appeals have been made. The end is now inevitable.

There's nothing there except judgment. There's nothing there except death. And then after death, a judge, an angry judge, waiting.

So the situation is hopeless. If you're in the kingdom of darkness. It's slavery. Israel and Egypt, they were held as slaves.

And the whips drove them. And they worked and they worked. But you know what they took home for all their labor? They didn't get anything for all their work. And that's the dominion of darkness.

[10:25] What do you gain for all of your sin? Christian, now that you have a clearer mind and a clearer head, you can answer that question. What did you gain for that whole life?

What do you gain now when you sin? Aren't those only things to be ashamed of? What does sin ever, ever do for anyone? But in the kingdom of darkness, you just keep doing it.

So I have a question. Who does what hurts them again and again and again? Who does, who goes to work for nothing?

To not gain a thing? Well, I'll tell you who. A slave. A slave. The Latin word for slave is addict.

You know that? So you see someone addicted to drugs. They do it over and over again. And what do they really reap for all that they sow? Very little.

[11:29] Nothing at all. And that's the kingdom of darkness. You're enslaved to your own desires. You can't escape your evil, wicked, hurtful desires. And so everything you do, everything that you want, ends up rebounding on you and hurting you and afflicting you even worse.

That's the kingdom of darkness. Slavery. Hopelessness. Ignorance. Being cursed. Living life without God. And maybe to add one more thing.

Something that little children can relate to more than most. What is it like to be in the dark? It's to have fear reign in your hearts. So Adam and Eve were cut off from God after that first sin and they're instantly hiding.

The kingdom of darkness is marked by profound fear. Fear of God. Fear of death. Fear of I'm wasting my life. What a terrible place to live in.

What a terrible place to live in. And if you haven't run to Jesus, I have just described your house, your home, your address, where you live. And that's where the Colossians were born.

[12:47] They were born there, just like we were. They were born there. But now Paul is thanking God the Father because God the Father qualified them to share in the inheritance with the saints in the kingdom of light.

So they're in the kingdom of the saints now. Of the holy ones in the kingdom of light. And so there's been a drastic moving project. God has come to that house, come to that kingdom, and he has brought them into the kingdom of light.

And so let's talk now about what is the kingdom of light like? What is it like to be a Christian? Well, it's the best thing in the world to be a Christian.

It's the worst thing in the world to be a complaining Christian because nothing could be further from the truth. So what is the kingdom of light like? Well, it's like the dominion of darkness except different.

It's just like the dominion of darkness except backwards. Up is down and down is up. Left is right and right is left. Not Satan, but Jesus rules here. Jesus rules here.

[13:50] This is the kingdom of God's son. It's not an evil tyranny. Some people have this mind that being a Christian is living under all these harsh rules and living under a tyrant.

The kingdom of God is not like that. The kingdom of light is not like that at all. It's not a tyranny. It's not North Korea. The closest thing I could come to is it's Camelot. It's all your wildest dreams coming true because your king is so great.

It's not oppression. It's freedom. Here Jesus, the humble, the meek king who comes riding on a donkey, who brings children and he sits them on his lap, who loves his people so much that he lays down his life for them.

Jesus is not a king that leads from the rear and feeds his people into the war machine and destroys them. And he's the king that leads from the front and who suffers in the place of his people.

Jesus is the king of the kingdom. And this king doesn't use you. Instead, he gives you his life. This is a kingdom of righteousness and holiness.

[14:59] Who lives in this kingdom. Verse 12 says the saints do. The holy ones. The ones who do God's will live in this kingdom.

And so when you're in this kingdom, your neighbor is one in whom Jesus takes great delight in. One whom Jesus loves. So your neighbor in the kingdom of God serves the Lord.

It's not like the kingdoms that we live in. Where our neighbors could be at cross purposes with us and they live for totally different things than us. In the kingdom of God, all the citizens are serving the same king.

And the dress of this kingdom is holy garments. Psalm 110. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle arrayed in holy majesty. So in this kingdom, the king gives you holiness.

He gives you a holy record. He gives you a holy heart. He works in you a holy life. So he gives you a holy record in heaven. And then he gives you his own spirit.

[16:04] His own holy spirit to live in your heart. And then he works in you to love and obey him. And so this is a kingdom where love reigns.

It's where love happens. It's not every man for himself. It's not a pirate's cove where there's nothing but darkness and violence and selfishness and confusion.

And it's holy. It's bright. It's majestic. It's thoughtful. It's true. It's freedom. It's hope. It's joy. It's creation, not destruction.

And the ultimate reason for all these things is because this is where God is. This is where God rules. And Israel was a picture.

It was meant to be a picture of that kingdom. He lived in their midst. So when he brought them through the Red Sea, he said, I've made you a nation. You are now my kingdom.

[17:01] You are now my people. And now I am here to live with you. I'm here to be your God and you will be my people. And so the kingdom of God is nothing less than living with God.

So the all-important question is, are you in that kingdom? Are you on the same side as God?

What's your spiritual address? Now, what if you want to get into this kingdom?

What if you don't like the kingdom of darkness anymore? How do you get moved from one to the other? How does God qualify you?

How do you move into the kingdom of light? Well, if I were to go down to Mexico, I would get in my car. I would drive down there and I would have papers and my passport.

They would ask me questions. And I would answer their questions and they would let me through. I would do all sorts of things, jump through some hoops.

[18:06] Not very difficult to get from one kingdom to another. But moving out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light is not like moving the United States from the United States to Mexico or to Canada.

It is more like moving out of North Korea into South Korea. The king doesn't want you to leave. No one is free to leave this kingdom.

And in reality, everyone is so brainwashed in this kingdom, they don't want to leave. So even if you're beginning to ask that question, how do I get out of the kingdom of light?

I think that's showing you that God might be working in your heart. So how do you get from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light? Well, God must do something. God must do something.

And Paul uses three words to tell us what God does to move people from one kingdom into the other. The first word is rescue. He rescues us.

[19:07] So how do you get into the kingdom of light? God, the father rescues you. So you're trapped. You're caught. You're captured. You need rescued.

The kingdom of darkness is a place that you need rescued out of. And God in Jesus Christ becomes your rescuer. In July 1976, Palestinian and German terrorists hijacked an Air France airplane.

Had 248 passengers on board. And there was a large group of Jewish Israeli passengers on board as well. And that was the reason for this particular plane being hijacked.

The hijackers took the plane as it was flying across Italy. And they flew it down to Uganda in the middle of Africa.

In the middle of the heart of Africa there. And in Uganda, the terrorists released all the non-Jewish hostages. And that's when the Israeli defense force decided to act.

[20:25] In Israel, there's a motto. And I've been told that it's pasted everywhere, all along their walls and everywhere you can see. And it's this. Never again. Never again.

To them, that isn't just a propaganda slogan. And they mean it. They're committed as a nation that nothing like that is going to happen to our people again.

So, Israeli commandos flew over 2,500 miles in the dark. At low level through the African darkness to assault the airfield.

The Palestinians and the Ugandan military that were supporting the terrorists. The assault lasted 53 minutes. All the hijackers, close to 45 Ugandan soldiers, were killed.

11 MiG fighter planes were destroyed. And out of 106 hostages, 103 were rescued. The only Israeli killed was the commander of the operation.

[21 : 29] And it was a rescue to remember. But Jesus did something far greater than even that. That is a remarkable story. But Jesus did even something more remarkable.

He dropped secretly into the kingdom of darkness. And he faced all the hordes of Satan. He overcame the sin of man. And in the end, after doing all of that, he faced the wrath of his own father to rescue us.

How do you get out of the kingdom of darkness? You're rescued. You're rescued. That's the first word. The second word is transplant. Transplant.

The second. The second. You're transplanted out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God's son. That's what it says here in verse 13. He rescued us from the dominion of darkness and he brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves.

That word brought is the word transplant. And so maybe this spring you have done some transplanting of plants. You found flowers.

[22 : 40] You found plants in one particular bed. And you dug them up. And you picked them up. And then you moved them to another bed. And then you replanted them.

Well, that is what God has done for us. We were dying in that dark shade. And he dug us up. And he brought us out into the sun. Josephus, the Jewish historian, uses the same word to tell what happened to the people of Samaria when the Assyrian king came and moved them out of their kingdom.

When he conquered them. Josephus wrote this. Tiglath-Pelazar, the king of Assyria, made them prisoner and transplanted them. It's the same exact word. Transplanted them into his own kingdom. And so he took them and picked them up out of their kingdom and moved them into his own kingdom. That's what God did. He found us in our native and our natural kingdom.

And he picked us up and he planted us in his own kingdom. So how do you get into the kingdom of light? Well, God digs you up. He uproots you.

[23 : 51] And then he takes you and he plants you in his own kingdom. He takes you out of your native kingdom and plants you into his own kingdom.

So the word transplant. The third word is redemption. He redeems you. And that's a biblical word. We use it often. I don't know how much we think about actually what it generally means.

So he brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves in whom we have redemption. The forgiveness of sins. Redemption is a word to say that we've been bought. Not brought.

Bought out of slavery. We were in debt. And so we were enslaved. And we were ransomed. A price was paid to release us from our slavery.

So in the Old Testament Israel, slavery was generally for economic reasons. You became a slave in Israel because you lost all your money.

[24 : 51] You had no money. You couldn't pay your debt. And so you sold the only thing you had, which was yourself. You sold yourself into slavery as a payment for your debt. But at any time, your relatives, your kinsmen could come along, scrape the money together, pay the person your debt, and they could redeem you by paying a price.

That's redemption. And that's the picture here. So we're slaves in the kingdom of darkness because we owe this huge debt to God that we can never repay.

And the law locked us up. The law was God's jailkeeper, and it locked us up, and it wouldn't let us go until it was satisfied, and we were chained to our debt.

And in the darkness, if you will, we had our Swiss Army knife, and it had ten blades. And we thought maybe this Swiss Army knife with ten blades could cut me out of my debt.

And every time I tried to cut with my Swiss Army knife, I just would break the blades more, and I would end up cutting myself. Trapped.

[26 : 03] Enslaved. In debt. A wretch. And that's where God found us. A burden on our back. In debt up to our eyeballs.

And he sent a kinsman redeemer to pay the price. And Jesus took his own blood and his own sweat and his own tears, and he paid our debt in full.

So, Christian, are you a slave anymore to sin? Are you in debt anymore? No. The price has been paid down to the last penny.

So, child of God, there's no bill coming. The collectors have been silenced. There's no one hunting you down. God isn't on the prowl to recover what he's lost.

The price has been paid. Jesus has said, it is finished. And so you're free. There's no condemnation here. There's no debt coming. There's no bills coming. All your sins have been forgiven.

[27:05] You've been brought out of that darkness and into the light. So, how do you escape the kingdom of darkness? God has to do something. God has to rescue you. He has to transplant you.

He has to redeem you. And praise the Lord, this is our God. Then this is our message. This is what we proclaim. That in him there is redemption. God is the one who saves sinners, who rescues them.

And so we can call men everywhere to repent, to believe, to come into the kingdom. Call on him and he'll rescue you. Call on him and he'll deliver you out of that bondage.

He'll save you. God is a merciful God. We have found it to be so. Now, so that's the kingdom, the two kingdoms.

That's how you get from one to the other. Now, I want to give you five points to take home with you.

One, has God done this for you?

[28:09] Then let thanksgiving transform your life. Let thanksgiving transform your life. Give thanks and give thanks often. Because this living in the kingdom of God, this being brought into the kingdom of light, is something that you enjoy every day.

And so for every day that you enjoyed it, it is something to say thank you for. Whatever is going on in your life, no matter the hardships, the sufferings, the trials, the difficulties, the sickness, whatever, you can thank God that you are not in the kingdom of darkness anymore.

You're free. You're safe. You're loved. And so give thanks. Think often about it and thank God as often as you think about it. This can't be something that you just think, oh, that was a good sermon and you walk out.

No. Think about this. This is a present reality in your life. You are in the kingdom of light. You're living under God's smile. You're free from your debt. You've been rescued. So thank God often.

And we would be happier, more productive Christians if we were more thankful Christians. And so I say, let Thanksgiving transform your life. Two.

[29:21] So we're talking about five points to take home with you. One, be thankful. Two, live sexually pure lives. And you say that seems really out of left field. Let me just quote what Paul says in Ephesians.

And just listen. Doesn't it sound so much like this passage? So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord.

So this is something that we have to do. Paul is serious. This is an apostolic command. I insist on it in the Lord. That you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more.

Paul attaches sexual immorality to living in the kingdom of darkness. Sexual immorality is a life that belongs to that kingdom. That belongs to that dominion of darkness.

[30:32] And Christian, if you aren't in that kingdom anymore, then you can't live that way anymore. Get rid of it. It doesn't fit your life. It doesn't belong in your life.

Third, do not let sin reign in your hearts. Don't let sin reign in you. You've been moved out of the dominion of sin. You've been moved out of that kingdom.

So therefore, don't let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Does sin want to reign in your life, Christian? Yes, it does.

It's used to that. It likes that. Of course, it wants to do that. But don't let it. God has rescued you from that kingdom so you don't have to live under sin's dominion anymore.

So does sin want to reign in your life, Christian? Yes. But don't let it. Just like God said to Cain, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to have you.

[31:30] It wants to control you. It wants to master you. Don't let it. Don't let it. Is sin reigning somewhere in your life, in your thoughts, in your emotions, in your attitudes, in your body?

Jesus is your rightful king. Defeat, destroy the insurgents. Resist its claim. Resist its power. Resist its propaganda. It has no right here. Fourth. Serve your king wholeheartedly. That makes sense.

You're in his kingdom. You should serve him. Find a practical way to serve Jesus this week. And here is his body. And here is his body.

You can serve him by serving them. And remember Jesus, your king, rewards those who serve him. At the end, he'll say, well done, good and faithful servant. Come and enter the joy of your master.

[32:33] Therefore, my dear brothers, let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Everything that you do for one of these, you're doing to him. You're serving him. Fifth. Fifth. And finally, don't go looking in the dark for what can only be found in the light.

Don't go look in the dark for what can only be found in the light. There's an old vaudeville joke. You know, an old stage act joke. And the scene opens, and it's night.

And a man is looking for something on the street. He's under a lamppost, and he's looking for something. And another fellow comes up to him, and he says, what are you looking for?

Can I help you find it? And the man says, sure. Tells him what he's looking for. And the man asks a very good question. He says, well, where did you lose it?

[33:39] And the man who's looking frantically all along the street says, I lost it across the street. And the man said, well, why are you looking for it over here? Why are you looking for it over here?

And he's like, well, here's the light. I can't see anything over there. Well, that man was looking in the light for something that he could only find in the dark.

And so what sin does is it makes us turn that story inside out. Sin makes us turn that story upside down.

Instead of looking for joy in life where it can be found in the light, sin wants us to go back in the dark and look for it. And look in the dark street when it's really only in the light.

And sin will make us a bigger fool than that man. But in the gospel, God says, now come over here. He calls us out of the dark where we're looking and rooting around trying to find things.

[34:43] And he says, now come here. Come into the light. Here's life. Here's forgiveness. Here's joy. Here's peace. Here's help. Here's hope. Here I am. You can have me.

And so, Christian, if God has called you, don't be turning around and looking in the dark for things that can only be found in the light. And if you are in the dark and you're looking for that kind of life that you want, you're looking for peace.

You're looking for rest. You're looking for joy. You're looking for a life that's worth living. Well, quit looking for it in the dark. You won't find it there.

It can only be found in the light. You're looking in the wrong place. You're looking in the wrong place. And the gospel says, you can come over here and you can look in the light and you can find what you want.

And all that you're looking for can be found in Jesus and his kingdom. And he's inviting you.

Remember, what was the heart of Jesus' message? When he started preaching, what was his message?

[35:51] He said, the kingdom of God is at hand. It's right here. It's yours. You can have it. Repent and believe. Drop what you're doing.

Stop what you're doing. And come into the kingdom. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. I'm good. I'll give you this kingdom. There's no great deeds. There's no money.

There's no status that you have to reach. It's without money, without works. And you can come and have it. Just come in. Come into the light. Repent and believe.

And it's yours. And you know what? Everyone who has done that, everyone who has done that, who has repented and believed, has found everything that they're looking for.

They found it in Jesus. They found it in his kingdom. And so, dear sinner, don't go looking in the dark for something that can only be found in the light.

[36:49] Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would take your word and apply it to us.

Only you can really call a sinner out of darkness. And only you can take the blinders off of our eyes. So, I pray that you would do that.

That you would open all of our eyes. That we might see more and more of your light. See more and more of the glory of living in your kingdom. That we might be thankful Christians.
That you might have the honor and the praise from our lives. Help us to be more thankful. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.