

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man

Various Passages

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 31, 2021

Greetings to you and thank you for joining us for another online sermon here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. We're about to finish our first year of a pandemic. We weren't expecting this and I don't think anybody was. Someone asked me recently, "Why are things so hard for the church right now? Not just our church, but every church? Why are things so difficult?" And I said, "Well, it's because they're difficult everywhere. They're difficult for everybody. Right now it doesn't matter what you're doing. The whole world has been turned upside down by this thing. But that doesn't mean that we need to give up. And it doesn't mean that we need to quit as a body of Christ. The church keeps going and it's doing that through ministries like this one. We're continuing to work here through ministries like our video and recording work that we're doing. Even though we can't meet right now we can do this. We can sit under the preaching of the Word of God and we're doing that week in and week out. And we can still pray. As I told you last time, the government is allowing us to meet together in small groups for prayer right now to bring our request before the throne of God. If you would like to join us just contact our church office and we can sign you up for that.

But all this is to say that the church is not stopping the work right now. We're going to keep going because, listen friends, even though the Coronavirus has surprised us, it didn't surprise God. Even though it caught us off guard and shook us up, it didn't shake Him up or catch Him off guard. He was ready for it. He's been planning for it since before the foundation of the world. And so you can trust in Him. You don't need to be afraid or worried in times like this. We get panicked and afraid because we forget that our God is in control of all these things. Because we forget that our God is a big God. He's bigger than anything. You need to put your hope in Him.

And with that said this morning, we're in the middle of a series that we wouldn't be in if it were not for the Coronavirus. We're in the middle of a series that we would not be in if it were not for this crazy year because it's on the Christian and the government. We are talking about the Christian in the government because as you know, this year has been crazy for a reason and that's because of the government. We've had to wrestle with them over several issues like the lockdowns and the restrictions and what an essential service is. We've had to wonder about things like why this group gets to meet right now and why this group doesn't. We've had some members email them and ask why Walmart gets to be open right now and the bars and the restaurants and the marijuana shops. But the church does not. What's going on? Why are we doing that? And it raises another important question, and that's what is the church supposed to do about that? How are we supposed to respond to the government right now? I mean, I don't care what your views are on the Coronavirus. Everyone disagrees with the government over something right now, I don't care what your thoughts are on the pandemic. No one sees eye to eye with it on everything. Because there's just too much going on. Right? There's just too much happening. And so how is the church supposed to deal with it? That's what this new series is about. That's what we've been discussing. We're on the tail end of it. We have this sermon and one more to go but we're going to continue today by looking at the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man.

You know, so far, we've talked about several things in the series. We've looked at several issues like the role of the government, what the government is supposed to do. We've said that it's supposed to be an authority in our lives which is what God has called the government to do. It's been called to be an earthly authority, or a secular authority. It obviously doesn't have the authority God does. It doesn't have the spiritual authority that He has and

the ultimate authority, but it does have an earthly one. And we need to respect it for that. It does have a secular authority, and we need to treat it as such. And then we talked about the role of the church. That was the next part of our series, we talked about what it was supposed to do, and that is to make disciples, the church needs to make disciples or followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's our job to tell people about him. It's not our job to talk about the Coronavirus every week; it's not our job to talk about the pandemic or what's going on with politics or world events, or even what's going on with the government. Our job is to tell people about the true King of the universe, the Lord Jesus. And there's no sense in talking about little kings when we have a big King to talk about, right? There's no sense in spending all our time on little rulers on puny rulers, when we have high and lofty One. So we need to tell people about Him. And that brings us to what we're going to talk about this morning; it leads to what we're going to talk about today because today I want to talk to you about the kingdom of God. This morning, I want I want to talk to you about what Jesus' Kingdom looks like.

And to do that, let me let me begin this way: If we were going to give it a simple definition, the kingdom of God can be defined as God's rule over the earth. It's a simple way to define it, very concise, but the kingdom of God refers to God's rule over the earth. His rule over creation is rule over the universe. I think we all understand that God is a King. You can't really escape that when you read the Bible. But this is how far His kingdom goes. This is how far His rulership goes. It goes throughout the entire universe, the entire world. We have a leader in Canada, but he only rules over the nation of Canada. There's a leader in the United States, he rules over the United States; there's a leader in Mexico, he rules over Mexico. Our God rules over the world which means He reigns over all the chaos we see around us. He reigns over all the pandemonium we see down here, but He doesn't do it all in the same way. And that's important. You need to see that He doesn't reign over the universe the same way throughout history. His kingdom changes and at times goes through phases. Since our God is a creative God, He rules the world that way. Since He's a dynamic God, He rules the world in a dynamic way, where things don't always say the same. You know this because you didn't bring a goat with you to worship today, did you? You didn't bring a goat with you or a lamb to sacrifice at the altar, because you understand that's over now. You understand that what Israel did-what the Jews did in the Old Testament-is not for today because that was a phase of the kingdom that has come and gone. And likewise, you didn't stand by the crystal sea this morning, either. You didn't stare at the pearly gates and walk on streets of gold to get to church this morning because you understand that hasn't happened yet. That phase of the kingdom is in the future, it's down the road, because the kingdom comes in stages; it doesn't look the same way all the time; it doesn't act the same way all the time.

And with that said, if you would open your Bibles with me this morning to the book of first Chronicles. That's what we're going to be looking at today we're actually going to be looking at several passages in Scripture. We're going to be turning to several places. So just have your fingers ready to turn but this is a good place to start. If you will look in your Bibles at the book of first Chronicles chapter 29. I'd like to read it to you before we get started. If you would read first Chronicles 29 starting in verse 10. It says:

So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You O LORD God of Israel our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt yourself as head overall. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now, therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I and

who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.”

Just to say a few words about this, verse 10 says that this prayer was said by whom? It was said by David, the king of Israel, one of the most famous people in the Bible. You may not have thought about this before, but the name David has mentioned about 1000 times in the Bible which is more than anyone else but Jesus because David was the king of the Jews. In fact, he was Israel's greatest king. He was their ideal king. He was the guy who set the standard for everyone else. In fact, after him, almost every king in Israel was measured by these words: why can't you be more like David? Why can't you be more like David, the man after God's own heart? He loved the Lord with all that he had. And as a result, the city of Jerusalem was named after him. It was called the city of David. He was also given his own special covenant: he was given the Davidic Covenant in which he was told that the Messiah would come from him who would be an eternal Son who would reign on an eternal throne. King David's kingdom was going to last forever, and in that sense, eternally. Towards the end of his life, as he's coming to his latter days, David reflects on that. He reflects on God's greatness to him. He's getting ready to build the temple; getting ready to get all the things together for his son, Solomon to take over. And as he reflects on this, he says these words: “Yours is the dominion, O LORD.” In other words, he's saying that all of this comes from you. Everything that I have, Oh, God, is yours. All the wealth and fame and recognition, all the honors and titles and accolades. That's nothing compared to what You have, because this is all Yours. Yours is the dominion. That word “dominion” in Hebrew, means “reign” or “kingdom”. In fact, some of your translations, if you have the English Standard Version, you'll notice it says, “Yours is the kingdom, O LORD.” In other words, David says, “While I'm king over Israel, God, You are King overall. Well, I'm king over the Jews and I can do as I please with them, God, You are king over the world, and You can do what you want with all of it; nothing can stop You; nothing can stay Your hand.” And if you notice, as you read through this, to express this, it's like David can't find enough words to say it. He can't find enough expressions. There are several comprehensive statements in here, like the term “forever and ever” and, “everything that is in the heavens and earth is Yours”. And the word “everything” here means that all that there is belongs to You O God. There's nothing that doesn't fall between heaven and earth. There's nothing that doesn't fit between those boundaries. And David says God owns all of it. He rules over all of it. And He exalts Himself as head overall.

God stands at the heavens looking down at what He has made, which raises an important question for us to talk about this morning. It raises an important issue, and that is: if God is a King like this, then why is the world so messed up right now? Have you ever wondered that? I'm sure you have. We all have, we're actually going to spend an entire sermon on that subject next week. So just save the question for a week. But if God is a King like this, it's worth asking why? Why are things so bad right now? Why do we fight with the government so much? Why don't we wrestle with our leaders? What's going on? And in fact, furthermore, what does God want us to do with our leaders today? How does God want us to respond to the government? If he's a king, then can't we just ignore them? If he's the big King, and the big ruler and the top guy, can't we just forget about the bottom ones and rebel because we serve God and not man? You ask that because if you follow the Christian news right now, you'll know a lot of people are talking that way today, aren't they? You know a lot of Christians are thinking like that because they want to rebel against the government, they want to forget all about it and just do whatever they want. But as we've seen before in this series, you can't do that because God doesn't want you to. You can't just rebel completely and totally disregard human authority because God doesn't allow you to do that. I also asked this because you hear a lot of other people saying this, they say we should forget about all this, we should forget about these earthly governments because the kingdom is coming. You hear that phrase a lot in certain circles. Almost

like a mantra, they say we should ignore our leaders and rebel, do whatever we want, because the kingdom is coming. Jesus is on his way so don't worry about all this stuff down here because it's all going to burn. I want to tell you this morning that the Bible doesn't say that either. It doesn't say that God wants you to forget about this world. He wants you to do the opposite. He wants you to pay attention to this world. Jesus didn't come so you could forget about all these lost sinners in this world. He didn't come so you can reject them. He came for something else. But it all goes back to the subject of the kingdom. It goes back to how we see this topic of Scripture. You know, while it may not seem that way, at first, The kingdom of God is a very important one in the Bible. It's very crucial, can seem so metaphysical of a subject but it impacts how we look at everything. It impacts how we look at the world around us. So we need to take time to study it today and dig into it and understand how it really impacts the way we see the government.

Several years ago, one of the men in our church told me that he was at a Christian charity event when someone said, "Why are we doing all this? Why are we going through all this trouble to feed the poor, help the homeless, give to the needy? The kingdom is coming." That's what they said: "Jesus is almost here." The man replied, "Well, yeah, he is. But shouldn't we try to help people get ready for that?" Shouldn't we try to help people get ready for the kingdom? My friends, I want to tell you, he was right.

We need to help people get ready for Jesus. That's why we're doing all this. That's why we're going through the trouble which is what we're going to talk about this morning. If you're taking notes this morning, in several passages of Scripture, we're going to look at five ways the kingdom of God is used in the Bible. And I just want to tell you on the front end, this sermon will be a little more theological than the other ones in this series. It's going to be a little more scholastic, but we're doing this because you can't really understand what's going on in the world today without this. You can't understand what's going on in the church and the state and the tension between the two if you don't understand the kingdom of God. In fact, you can't understand anything really. You can't understand anything in the Bible because this is what it's all about. This is what the Bible is about. God is building a kingdom; He's creating a people to rule for all eternity. He starts off with Israel in the Old Testament, moves on to the church in the New Testament, and one day He'll move on to the millennial kingdom, then on to the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth. But it all goes back to this: God is creating His own form of government. He's creating His own kingdom to rule, which is why the governments of this world don't scare us. This is why the kingdoms of this world don't intimidate us. They don't make us afraid because we have something that is so much greater than all of that.

Today we are looking at five ways the phrase "Kingdom of God" is using the Bible. The first one is with the universal kingdom. If you're taking notes, the first way the phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the Bible is with the universal kingdom, which is the one I just described to you. It refers to God's rule over the earth. The Universal Kingdom refers to God's rule over all of creation, over the entire universe. And if you read back in first Chronicles 29 again with me, it says, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt yourself as head overall. Yours, oh Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory, and the majesty. And everything that is in the heavens in the earth. Yours is the dominion, oh Lord, and you exalt yourself as head overall. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone."

We've already said a few words about this so I won't say much here, but it's hard for us to understand what this prayer meant to David. It's hard for us to understand the significance of what he says because we don't live in a world like he did. We don't live in a time like he did because we don't have a king. We don't have a ruler like this. We have a premier here in Canada, we have a prime minister, but it's not the same thing as this, because the Prime Minister is elected and appointed and affirmed by the people. He has a system of checks and balances, he has a level of accountability. If we don't like him, we can remove him from office. If we're upset with him as a society we can get him out. Israel didn't have that. They didn't have that kind of government, because they had a king. They had someone who ruled for life had someone who ruled until they died. And then when they were done, their son took over. And then when they were done, their son took over. When they were done, their son took over. It never left the family and never got out of this line of people, which was great if you had a great king, like David. Things in the nation went well. But if you had a bad one, it was awful. Because they did whatever they wanted with whomever they wanted, and nobody could stand in their way. In fact, when you read the book of First and Second Chronicles, and First and Second Kings, and you study the kings of Israel, one thing you'll notice very quickly is how bad they were. One thing you pick up on right away is how evil these men were, because they had no accountability. They stood at the top of the food chain and they knew it. It was a cultural thing and everybody acted in such a malevolent manner.

David says here that even though God is not a king like that, even though God is not evil and wicked, He's a good God; He's a holy God. But there's still this in common with him and those other guys. And that is that God is a king and He does whatever He wants. He has total freedom. No one can stand in His way. "Yours is the dominion O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all." The word "all" there it's open ended unqualified. It is to say that God exalted Himself over all that exists, all...fill in the blank...all everything. He has a universal kingdom. He has a comprehensive one that covers every jot and tittle of creation. Every person, place, and thing is under his authority. Every object from the tallest mountain top down to the smallest atom, it's in His control. There's nothing that He doesn't rule over. RC Sproul said there are no Maverick molecules in the universe. And there's no Maverick molecules in God's kingdom. He reigns over all of it. In fact, if you drew it on a timeline, this kingdom of God would look like one long line running through everything. Or it would look like one long line running over everything, starting at creation, starting at the very beginning or even before that, and going all the way to the end. Without ever stopping, without ever taking a break. Which means that whatever happens in this world, this kingdom stays put. Whatever happens in this lifetime, it doesn't move. It doesn't budge, it doesn't get shaken up. We get shaken up down here. God doesn't get shaken up up there. We get stirred around and go crazy and go nuts. It doesn't happen with Him. It happens with some of these other kingdoms that we're going to talk about in a minute. I'll show you that in a moment. Some of these other kingdoms are going to move and budge and twist and shape around. But this one doesn't. It's been said that you can't knock God off his throne. No one's strong enough to do that which should give us comfort by the way. This first phase of the kingdom and just getting our minds around this should give us a sense of peace. In our attributes of God's study this week we talked about the attribute of omnipotence which means God has all power. You should take joy in that as a Christian, you should take great hope in that.

Because it means that no matter what happens in this world, our God is still in control. No matter what happens in this crazy life with the Coronavirus and the pandemic and 2020 and in the nightmare that it was God is still ruling over and He hasn't lost His grip. He hasn't lost His power. He hasn't lost His touch. He hasn't lost anything. So you don't need to panic. You have no reason to panic. A Christian book of Ephesians says Jesus has seated us in the heavenly places with Him, which means we sit it up there in this universal kingdom with Him.

When you survey the Bible, there are a lot of different passages that talk about this but one that really sticks out to me, because it draws an interesting application to this, is Isaiah 40. You don't have to turn there. But let me just read it to you. It's one of my favorite passages in Scripture. But read Isaiah 40, verses 15 and 17. It says, "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust... All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless." It's quite a passage there, and it's quite a statement but Isaiah says that the nations of the kingdoms of this earth are like a drop in the bucket, or a speck of dust on the scale compared to God. It means they don't weigh anything to Him. They don't account for anything to Him; He hardly even knows they're there. I mean, no one steps up on a scale and says, "Hey, who put this dust on the scale?" No one steps up on it and says, "Hey, where did all this dust come from? Now, I gotta weigh myself all over again." You don't do that because dust weighs nothing, it counts for nothing. And Isaiah says that the nations are that way compared to God. They're like a drop in a bucket, they're like a flash in the pan, they go by in an instant to Him; in a second they're over. Doesn't mean that He doesn't care about them. God cares about the nations; it just means that they can't touch Him; they can't hold a candle to him. Because His kingdom is over all, it's so much bigger than all of this petty stuff. So you shouldn't worry about it. Listen, friends, when you get worried about the government, when you get worked up about the nations of this earth, do you know what you're doing? You are worrying about nothing. Nothing. You are worrying about dust. When you get angry about how things are going today, when you get worked up and mad and yell at the TV, you're yelling at a drop in the bucket. And you don't need to do that. It doesn't make any sense. You need to remember that you serve a King who is over all.

And that leads us to the next thing to talk about this morning; it leads to another way that the phrase "kingdom of God" is used in Scripture. The first one is with the universal kingdom which refers to God's rule over the earth. It refers to His rule over all of creation. He rules it in such a way and to such a degree that the nations are nothing compared to Him. Another point to consider, another way that phrase "kingdom of God" is used the Bible is the spiritual kingdom. The spiritual kingdom refers to God's rule over the saved; it refers to God's rule over believers only. While the universal kingdom refers to God's rule over everything, this one only extends to the saved; this one only extends to the believers and saints from the Old and New Testaments. And to see this, if you would turn in your Bibles to John chapter three. This is where you see this phase of the kingdom. Jesus is talking to a very interesting man in the Bible. David was very interesting. We just talked about him quite a bit, but this one is just as fascinating because it's the man Nicodemus, who was a politician of sorts. He was in the same line of work. Verse one calls him a ruler of the Jews so he wasn't the ultimate ruler, he wasn't the main guy, but he was a ruler in his own right. Most scholars say he would have been part of the Sanhedrin, he would have been part of the ruling council of the Jews. And so in this passage Jesus talks to him about a subject that he would have been interested in. He talks about the kingdom of God. And if you look in chapter three, read with me verses 1-3:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

If you notice, in verse three, this is the first time we see the entire phrase, "Kingdom of God" in our study, it's the first time the whole thing pops up for us. And also, if you notice, it doesn't refer to the universal kingdom because

they were already in it. It doesn't refer to the kingdom that we just described because Nicodemus was already in that kingdom, he was standing in it, which is why he doesn't say, "Well, what do you mean? See the kingdom? Jesus? I already see it. What do you mean see God's rule over the earth? I mean, we're in it right now." Jesus had a deeper meaning here because he was referring to the place where you go when you believe. Referring to the place you go, when you trust in God, Jesus said, "Unless you're born again, you cannot enter into that Nicodemus, you can't see that." The word "see" here doesn't mean see with your eyes, it means see with your mind, see with your heart and with your soul. It's another way of saying, "understand". "Unless you're born again, Nicodemus," Jesus says, "You cannot understand the kingdom of God." Later on, the verse says, he's a teacher. So Jesus is saying, "You're a teacher, you're a ruler, but all that accounts for nothing unless this happens in your heart." Jesus says in verse six, "That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In other words, to enter the kingdom of flesh, you need to be born of the flesh. To enter the kingdom of man, you need to be born of man, born of a woman, born of a mother. But in order to enter this kingdom, you need something else. In order to enter the spiritual kingdom, you need to be born of the Spirit. And that's something God alone can do. That's something that He alone can perform. You may be born a citizen of Canada, on your own, without any spiritual help anyway. And you may be born a citizen of the United States or South Africa or Mexico or Haiti or wherever. But if you want to be born a citizen of this kingdom, then you'll need more than one birth. If you want to experience all of this, Jesus says, you need more than just a physical one. You need to be born on the inside; you need to be born in your soul.

This would have shocked a man like Nicodemus. This kind of discussion would have rattled him to his core because he thought he was already part of that kingdom. He thought he already belonged to it because he was Jewish. He came from the line of Abraham. Nicodemus thought he was going to heaven because of his first birth. He thought he was already saved because of his physical birth. And now Jesus says, that's not the case. You need another one.

And while there's some mystery as to what this kingdom looks like, because it's of spiritual nature, as you study the Scripture it's clear that this kingdom includes everyone who believes, from the time of Adam all the way down to the last believer who would ever live. This Kingdom includes everyone from the days of the Old Testament all the way up to where we're at today which means this is the phase of the kingdom that we're in today. When you believe and you trust in Christ, you go into this. You enter the spiritual kingdom of God that you can't see with your eyes or see with your body. You have to see it with your soul. You know, if you think about it, God has not given us a nation to live in as Christians. When you become a Christian, God doesn't tell us all to move to this corner of the globe or that corner of the globe. He doesn't tell you to change your race. He doesn't even tell you to change your clothes, or your biological family, because He's come to give you something deeper than that and more significant. This is why you can't tell who the Christians are just by looking at them. This is why you can't tell who the saints are just by what they wear or the color of their skin. It was the same in the Old Testament. You couldn't know who the believers were back in Old Testament days, just by their clothes or the color of their skin because those who believed even back then were part of a spiritual kingdom. And let me tell you, this is a sad reminder for us today that when we study this phase of the kingdom it's a sad warning for some of us, because there are some people in church today who have never experienced this. There's some people in the church they come in week in and week out and they don't know what this is like, because they've never had a new birth. Like Nicodemus, all they've had is the same old one. All they've had is one birth. Because they think they're going to heaven just because they're born American or Canadian, or Mennonite or Dutch, or whatever the thing is.

And I want to tell you, if that's you this morning, you need to be warned by a passage like this. Because Listen, if that wasn't enough for Nicodemus, it's not enough for you. If that wasn't enough to save him, it won't be enough to save you. You need to change, you need to be converted, you need to be born again. This phase we're talking about here is the most important one we're going to look at today. Because if you don't get this, nothing else matters. If you don't get what Jesus is talking about here, it's all for nothing for you.

You need to pray to God to change your heart. A woman once came to the preacher, the evangelist George Whitfield, and she said, "Mr. Whitfield, why do you keep saying that we must be born again? Why do you keep telling us that?" And George Whitfield said, "Because dear woman, you must be born again." It's true. So let that stick with us today.

Another point to consider of how this phrase "kingdom of God" is used in the Bible, a third way, is with a theocratic kingdom, which refers to the kingdom God gave to Israel. We've looked at the universal kingdom and the spiritual one, now we're into the theocratic kingdom, which refers to God's rule over a specific group, a specific race of people over the Jews. And if you would, to see this one, turn in your Bibles over to the book of Exodus chapter 19. We're going to flip back a little bit and we're actually going to crawl into the mind of Nicodemus. We're going to take a look at what he would have been thinking about when Jesus mentioned the kingdom of God.

When you study the subject and consider the kingdom of God in Scripture, one thing you notice is that for quite a while in the Old Testament, there's no discussion of the law. In the book of Genesis anyway, there's no discussion of the 10 commandments or that sort of thing, because it hadn't been given yet. They didn't have the law. That doesn't mean God didn't give a law to the people to follow back then because He did. It Doesn't mean he didn't give commandments to people like Adam and Eve and Noah because He obviously did. He gave them commandments. But He didn't give them the collection of it. He didn't give them a complete list of commandments to follow until Israel showed up, until the Jews came along. In Exodus 19 Moses is going up to prepare to receive the law; he's going to prepare to receive the commandments. Exodus 19, verse three says,

Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain saying, "Thus you shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

There you see the word "kingdom" again because the Lord tells Israel, "If you will obey me, if you will keep my commands, then you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In other words, "I will make the church and the state into one." So God is telling them here that He will make the church and the political kingdom one entity, one institution, which is what the word theocracy means. It means the kingdom of God on earth, not just over the earth, but on the earth. Not just spiritually, but physically. It refers to an earthly kingdom that is run by God's rules, God's laws, in every sense of the term, which is what Israel was supposed to be. That's what God wanted the Jews to be. In fact, if you go on and read the book of Leviticus, after this, you'll see the word "holy" mentioned about I think it 40 times in the book of Leviticus, because that's what God was doing with the Jews, He

was making them holy, He was cleansing them off so they could be his nation. It was like He took them out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness to give them one long bath.

And if you just notice the language here in Exodus 19, it says, "I will make you into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". That means God was going to make them priestly and holy from top to bottom. He wants to make them godly and sanctified and different from all the other nations around them from all the other peoples. So that the other peoples would look at Israel and say, "What are they doing? They don't sin like we do, they don't lust like we do, they don't fight like we do. Let's go learn about their God." That was the intention. That was what this was to be about. And the thing that is important to remember with this kingdom, and the reason we want to bring it up, is because this is not what we're experiencing today. The thing you need to remember about this phase of the kingdom over anything else, is that this is not what we have right now, because we're not in this kingdom. The nation of Israel as a theocracy is over. It was finished when the Romans destroyed the temple. It was ended when the Roman Emperor Titus captured the city of Jerusalem. In 70AD he tore the temple down brick by brick, because at that point, the whole Jewish system collapsed. At that point, the whole idea of a theocracy caved in because they couldn't do it anymore. When the temple was over, they couldn't keep the law because they couldn't bring the sacrifices. They couldn't bring their goats and their lambs to the Lord. The whole idea of a synagogue today is a reminder that this is finished now. It doesn't mean that God doesn't have a future for the Jews. That's another sermon for another time. He does. But this, what we're reading in Exodus, is over for now. It's not what we're experiencing in the United States or Canada. We don't see a theocracy in other parts of the world where the gospel is preached today because that's over. And I mentioned that because I don't know if everybody gets that today. I don't know if everybody understands this point. Some people think we're still in a theocracy right now; some people think, or they behave, as if we're trying to create a kingdom of God on earth, not over the earth, not in the hearts of people but on the earth.

And what I mean is this, I don't know if you've ever heard of the Moral Majority before or the religious right. But the Moral Majority was a movement that started back in the 1970s to bring morality back to America. It was created to bring Christianity back to the United States as a nation. They saw all the problems going on in society, and they thought the way to fix it was with politics. They thought the way to fix it was through the law, through the legal system. So they fought for issues like prayer in the public schools, and the need to teach the Bible in the classroom. They fought over abortion or trying to overturn Roe versus Wade, they fought to defend the nuclear family and standing against homosexual marriage and all this kinds of stuff. But in short, they did it to make America Christian again. They did it to make it into a Christian nation. One book put it that they saw themselves as God's party. They spoke on God's platform, or in the words of one of their leaders, he said, "If we don't hang together, then we will all hang separately. So this organization is made up of Mormons, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and people of no faith at all. Because there are bigger issues to deal with right now. We can argue about theology after we save the country." And if you hear what he's saying there, he's got it absolutely wrong. He's got it absolutely backwards. While we would all say that things like abortion and saving the nuclear family are important, listen friends, it's all for nothing if we don't agree on theology. It's all for nothing if we don't agree on the gospel and what a Christian is. Because what's the point? What are we accomplishing at the end of the day? But they did that, because they misunderstood this whole issue of a theocracy. They wanted to make the church and the state one. They thought if we could change the laws, we could change people's hearts. And friends, I want to tell you, it does not work that way. Never has, it never will. In fact, now, God doesn't save people through one kingdom, he saves people through every kingdom. Now he doesn't save us and put us into one nation. He saves people from every nation. Now in the church, Jew and Gentile, slave and free are one. In fact, some scholars call

this the mystery form of the kingdom. It was a mystery in the Old Testament. The Jews didn't see it coming because when they rejected the Messiah, the Messiah sent the gospel to the nations. He sent His message into all the world. Romans 11 says He did that to make Israel jealous; He did that to get their attention. But the point is that this is what God is doing. Now, this is what he's focusing on today. And we should do the same. We can't say that we're going to worry about theology after we save the country. We can't say that we're going to worry about the gospel after we do this. It's not our main goal. Our main goal is to preach Christ and Him crucified. You know, there's a balance here. There's a healthy way to look at this issue. Because on the one hand, we can vote for laws to make society better. And we should; we need to do that. I would say we have a moral obligation to do that. But on the other hand, we can't expect those laws to change us. We can't expect those laws to make us Christian because it doesn't work that way. The law can't do that. It doesn't have the power. It doesn't have the ability. God alone changes the hearts of men. Christ alone changes hearts. And that's what we have to preach to people because that's the most important thing of all, and it leads us to one more point to consider this morning.

Let's review the other ones: the first way the phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the bible is with the universal kingdom, which refers to God's rule over the earth. And then secondly, there's the spiritual kingdom which is the rule over the saved and refers to God's rule over believers only. Third, we see the theocratic kingdom, which was God's rule over Israel, a specific group of people, the Jews, the nation of Jews, which is no longer around today. It ended with the destruction of the temple. The Old Testament version ended with the destruction of the temple. We have at least one more thing to talk about, and I've saved the best for last, the most encouraging one for last.

The fourth and fifth way the phrase "kingdom of God" is used in the Bible is with the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal kingdom, which refers to the future kingdom. It refers to the kingdom that is to come. And to see this, turn in your Bibles to the very end of it, turning your Bibles to the book of Revelation.

As you know, if you've read it before, the book of Revelation is a book about the future things to come. In fact, that's what the word revelation means, it means to reveal something or disclose it. In this book, John is disclosing what we can expect to see when the King returns, and if you look in Revelation 20, that's what this is specifically about. In Revelation 20 v.v. 4-6, it says,

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and reign with Him for a thousand years.

Now, I can't get into everything in here for the sake of time. But I want you to notice that after all that happens in the book of Revelation, after all the events and chapters one through 19. This is what God will do. This is how He's going to wrap it up: by setting up thrones, which means He's going to set up a system of government. He's going to set up a system of power. There's no reason you would set up thrones unless you're going to do that. He's going to establish a new kingdom. This is significant because we started with a kingdom this morning. And now we're going to end with one. We started with God ruling over the earth and now we're going to stop the same way. And to do that John says that there will be a resurrection. Verse four says He will bring back the souls of those

who have been beheaded because of their testimony, because of the Word of God and they will reign with Christ for 1000 years. This is known as the Messiah's Kingdom or the millennial kingdom. The word millennial means one thousand and refers to Christ's 1000-year reign on the earth. Some believe this number is figurative here, they believe it should be interpreted in a symbolic way. And that might be the case if it wasn't repeated so often. The word "thousand" is repeated six times from verse two all the way down to verse seven. And anytime a number is repeated like that, it's meant to be taken literally. It's meant to be a literal number. But what John is saying is that one day in the future, God will have a kingdom like this. He will resurrect the dead so they can reign on earth with Jesus for a thousand years.

Then I want you to notice, after the thousand years, it's going to be followed by another kingdom. It is going to be followed by one of an even greater nature because chapter 21 says this,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among them, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

Chapter 21 starts with the word "then". That's a chronological word. It's a time-sensitive word, which means that after the Millennial Kingdom, after that is over, then God will make another one. He will create a final kingdom, a new heavens and a new earth. Apparently, the millennial kingdom will have sin and death still in it and will still be part of the old realm, the old creation. Therefore, God is going to do away with that one in the end and create a brand new one for us. To say a little bit about that, verse two says that this will be a city made ready for her husband which means it will be prepared. To think about this, God created the first heavens and the first earth in six days. This one's going to take much longer than that. You can imagine how beautiful that will be, it will be prepared for us. John also says there will be no more mourning in that place, no more pain. It will be physical. If you read Revelation 21, all of these things in here are physical. In verse 10, John goes up on a mountain, that's physical. In verse 12, he sees a city with a high wall and gates; verse 14, it has foundation stones; verse 15, it has measurements, streets of gold; chapter 22 talks about a river of life, all those things are physical. It'll be tangible, which means you're not going to be floating on clouds strumming a harp all day, you're not going to be eating grapes, floating in the heavenlies. You're going to be living in a new heavens and a new earth. But the point is that all of this is to come. This is all in the future. It hasn't happened yet. This is what's on the horizon. This is what's here in the front mirror, the front window. Which means that you shouldn't get too comfortable here. You shouldn't get too attached to the things of this life because you have a better life to come as a Christian, you have a better Kingdom on its way in store for you. And friends, if we're honest about it with the reason we get so distracted by the world is because we forget this. The reason we get so sidetracked and worked up about politics and world events is because we don't remember that we have something better in store. We act like this world is all there is; we act like it doesn't get any better than this. But it does. John says it gets way better, so much better.

And you need to remember that today. To say it another way, one reason we get so worked up of other things of this life is we're so short sighted as Christians,; we can't see past the nose in front of our face. That's why the book of Revelation is in the Bible. If you've ever wondered about that, that's what it's in here to show you. It's here to help you see past this. It's there to help your gaze go beyond this puny world and what's one year of the

Coronavirus when you can have this, right? What's one year of a pandemic or lockdowns or restrictions or all this terrible stuff. When this is to come, friends, we have no reason to be angry. We have no reason to be afraid. Because we have this to look forward to.

In my studies this week, I came across a story of a mosque that was found in the city of Damascus and, and the interesting thing about it is where it was located. It was located right on the spot of an old church. The Muslims when they took it over, they just kicked the Christians out. They reshuffled the furniture, painting over a few things. But one of the walls there had these words that couldn't be painted over. The inscription said, "The kingdom of Christ is eternal." In other words, while you could kick the Christians out, while you could reshuffle a few things and paint over the walls, you can't kick Christ out of this world.

His kingdom last forever. A friends, let me ask you, do you believe that today? Are you resting in that? Are you trusting in that? You have a Savior who has a kingdom that's greater than anything in this world. And let me pray for you now that you would remember that and take it to heart today. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I know we've covered a lot of ground this morning. And our hearts have been focused on a lot of passages, they've been focused on a lot of texts. But Lord, we've done that to drive this final point home, that you are an eternal God. And we have an eternal future in You. Lord, I pray for my friends this morning that they would know that and believe that and trust in Your Word. I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ, that they would not be too focused on all of these things that are happening right now. It's not easy when we've got so much coming at us every day. It's not simple to have our minds on other things. When we have the news blaring at us and social media blaring at us and even our neighbors, it seems like everybody wants to talk about the same things right now. So Lord, would you draw our hearts and our minds into these things? Would you draw our souls into that which is greater than in this world? Thank you for Christ and that he's going to do all this for us. Thank you, Father, that you have come and invested in your people to such a degree that you would put up with human nature, humankind for this long. And you would keep working in us. Keep saving sinners and keep building a kingdom as we go out, Lord, as those who are part of the kingdom this morning, when we go out as those who are servants of the greatest King, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this all in His name for His glory. Amen.

Well, that is all for this morning. Thank you for joining us. If you'd like to know more about our church, you can find us online at www.gracefellowshipchilliwack.com or you can find us on YouTube, just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack and we will show up there but for now, may the Lord bless you.