



## Lesson 1

### A Tale of Two Kingdoms

## Opening Prayer

## Introduction

As a Christian, you enjoy the blessing of citizenship in two kingdoms. Identify times when your citizenship in one kingdom seems to clash with your citizenship in the other kingdom.

### Psalm 2

- 1 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth take their stand  
and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.
- 3 “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”
  
- 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.
- 5 Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- 6 “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”
- 7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:  
He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,  
the ends of the earth your possession.
- 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;  
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
  
- 10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.
- 11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way,  
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

1. As different as the rulers of the world are and as hostile as they may be toward one another, what common bond unites them all?
2. Give examples of this from Bible history and the history of the church.
3. What should we expect in this world as followers of Christ?

**Mark 13:12-13** “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

**John 15:1** “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”

4. Which words in Psalm 2 tell us why we don’t need to be afraid?
5. The following passages give us some truths about the kingdom of God. What can we say about God’s kingdom (over against the kingdoms of this world) based on these passages?

**Luke 17:20,21** Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, <sup>21</sup> nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

**Mark 4:26-29** [Jesus] also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

**Matthew 13:47-49** “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup> This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.”

**John 18:33-38** Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” <sup>35</sup> “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?” <sup>36</sup> 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.” <sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. 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.” <sup>38</sup> “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

**Matthew 28:19-20** “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

6. Complete “the church” column of the kingdom chart using the prompts below.

	The church	The state
Foundation and operating principle:		
Grows by:		
Duration:		
Sphere of Responsibility and Purpose:		

7. The church growth movement is a philosophy adopted by many Christian churches today that attempts to use research, analysis, and sociological tools to bring people into the church. The emphasis is on getting more people into the church, not necessarily on teaching the truth. The church growth movement has given us mega churches and nondenominational churches. List some dangers within this movement that could lead us as a church to lose our sense of purpose.
8. We sometimes call the governments of this world Jesus’ “other kingdom.” While the people of this world imagine themselves in charge, it is Christ who rules all things for the benefit of the church (Ephesians 1:19-22). What do the following passages tell us about the “other kingdom” (the state)?

**Romans 13:1, 4-7** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [...] <sup>4</sup> [The governing authority] is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. <sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

**Daniel 2:26-28, 44** The king asked Daniel... “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?” <sup>27</sup> Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, <sup>28</sup> but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: [Daniel proceeds to describe the massive statue that lays out the next four Near East empires.] <sup>44</sup> “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

**Colossians 1:16-18** For by [the Son] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

9. Complete “the state” column of the kingdom chart below:

	The church	The state
Foundation and operating principle:		
Grows by:		
Duration:		
Sphere of Responsibility and Purpose:		

10. Identify times in history when God has used world governments to benefit his church.

11. Why must we be cautious about identifying current events as “divine interventions”?

- 12.** How might you address the following conflicts in the life of a Christian who has citizenship in both of these kingdoms?
- We become involved in a political discussion and want to witness to our unbelieving friends.
  - Increasingly in our culture, we as Christians are defined (or defining ourselves) by what we are against and not what we are for.
  - We are frustrated because the state does not reflect our Christian values.
- 13.** Imagine that a friend suggests the church should mobilize to get more conservative Supreme Court judges approved in order to mandate prayer in public schools. How would you respond?
- 14.** What comfort do you find in what you've learned about church and state so far?