

My Kingdom is Not of This World

John 18:33 ESV (Pg. 528) So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” **34** Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” **35** Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” **36** Jesus answered, “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 the world.” **37** Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” **38** Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

I. We just celebrated the first coming of Christ into the world as an infant, born in Bethlehem. Outside of the miraculous events surrounding his birth, there was nothing of great significance that made him stand out to the world. He lived like any other Jewish boy in the first century, into adolescence and his early adult years.

A. But when he turned 30, he went to the Jordan to be baptized by John. There the heavens were ripped open, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and God proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son! With him I am well-pleased!”

B. From there, the Bible tells us he was driven into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil. Yet he defeated every assault by quoting God’s word.

1. It’s after this trial in the desert that Christ was revealed to Israel. The Gospel of Mark captures that moment simply and beautifully...

2. **Mark 1:14 ESV** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

a) “The time is fulfilled” For centuries the prophets prophesied his coming, saying he would redeem Israel when he arrived. This is the message of the Old Testament. Jesus is saying, “The time has come. What you were longing for is here”.

b) “the kingdom of God is at hand”. This would not be done by obsolete rules and obsolete rulers. Heaven’s very own King was now at the gates.

c) “repent and believe in the gospel” A response was required! You could either surrender to the Lord of life and live, or you could resist and perish. The response required was simple: repent as you believe the truth.

C. The common people loved this talk of the kingdom! His teachings were much more authoritative than those of the scribes!. They marveled at his miracles. They wondered aloud if Jesus could actually be the one that the prophets had foreseen, even boldly calling him the “Son of David”, their most revered king.

II. But instead of ousting the oppressing Romans, Christ spoke often of forgiving (even loving) your enemies! He said those who are first will be last, that servants would be great, and if someone strikes one cheek, offer them your other as well!

A. More than that he quickly made enemies of the religious leaders, who didn’t like the way he disrupted the power structures of the established order. Jesus kingdom would be radically different from any the people had previously known!

1. He violated the leaders' idea of sabbath observance, prayer, giving, and fasting. He interpreted the law of God in a way that placed more value on the motivations of the heart instead of a legalistic focus on their mere actions.
 2. Jesus offended them, and their solution was to put him to death. Just as was foretold, the chief priests turned him over to the Romans, demanding he be crucified for blasphemy and fomenting insurrection. They told Pontius Pilate that he called himself a king; a treasonous claim in the empire!
- B. Pilate was direct with Christ, "Are you the King of the Jews?" But Jesus wasn't interested in self defense, so he replied with a question of his own. "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Would Pilate indeed believe, or was he just parroting the charges brought against Jesus?
1. Pilate protested, saying it made no difference to him! He was no Jew! Jesus then describes his kingdom: "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 the world."
 - a) Christ's kingdom had infiltrated the world, but it wasn't born of any national or political power. It operated differently than Rome or Israel.
 - b) The main difference was that his kingdom could not be won or lost by violence. When Christ was handed over by the Jews, his kingdom was not in jeopardy. It can't be threatened by treachery or occupying armies.
 2. Christ's talk of how his Kingdom works gets Pilate thinking. If he has a kingdom, he must think himself a king, so he asks, "So you are a king?"
- C. The study of who Jesus was in history, as well as what he has accomplished, and his present significance is called Christology. Jesus response to Pilate's question is the centerpiece of all biblical Christology: "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."
1. Informed Christology recognizes that Christ wasn't just a peasant teacher, an insurrectionist, a carpenter or a product of first-century mythology. He is a King! For this purpose he was born, to reign over his redeemed creation.
 2. But he would rule by the truth, not by deception and intrigue, which are the stock and trade of the world system. He was born to be a king for this purpose: "to bear witness to the truth".
 - a) The Greek word for witness is "martyreo", it means a martyr! Jesus was stating that he would bear witness to the truth of God's love for his rebellious creation by dying for those he would redeem.
 - b) Jesus had already told his disciples 4 chapters earlier that he was The Truth. Now he tells Pilate, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Be very wary of those who claim to be Christians yet want to deny, edit, or even veto what God has said in his Word! Jesus says they can't belong to him, because they don't recognize his voice.
- D. Pilate responds with one of the saddest questions in scripture. "What is truth?"
1. This is the question that all people ask when they don't know Christ. Think about our culture. They don't know right from wrong. Many are confused about whether they are male or female. They don't know what constitutes human life, or its value, so they murder babies and shoot up schools.

2. But the Bible says **Proverbs 9:10 ESV** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. If you want to know truth, you must honor the Lord, and grow in the knowledge of Him.

a) This doesn't mean that lost people don't know anything. They can be very smart in areas of science, mathematics, and medicine. They can be incredibly artistic and creative. They can have much common sense.

b) But the only path to wisdom in matters of eternal, ethical, or moral consequence is through revering (fearing) the Lord in holiness.

E. After this exchange, Christ was led away and crucified, But we know that putting Christ to death did not derail or dismantle his kingdom! On the contrary, it established it forever! He rose after 3 days and soon after ascended to the right hand of his Father in heaven, taking his place as the King with all authority.

III. But why does this exchange between Christ and Pilate matter to us? This is a presidential election year. Our president, who was elected by a majority of evangelicals in 2016, has now been impeached by the House of Representatives, and is awaiting a trial in the senate. The nation is divided 50/50 between left and right, and both sides seem to be obsessed with obtaining or preserving power, so we must consider what Jesus teaches about political power, and how believers are to view it.

A. All of this came to a head on December 19th when Mark Galli, the editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, a publication founded by Billy Graham, published an opinion piece with the unambiguous title, "Trump Should Be Removed from Office"². Social media was soon filled with support and outrage for the article.

a) The article highlighted how those opposed to Mr. Trump see him as a morally bankrupt serial adulterer, who routinely assaults anyone who challenges him in a childish, petulant manner using his infamous Twitter account. They are justifiably disgusted by evangelicals who met Bill Clinton's very public immorality in the 90's with the battle cry of "character matters" have now responded to Trump's similar sins with a series of excuses and yawns.

2. Yet those who support Mr. Trump are legitimately pleased with the outcome of many of his policies, including those defending the unborn and religious liberties, as well as his judicial appointments of people who share values common to many of believers. These supporters wonder how those diametrically opposed to Trump can disregard any benefit to traditionally Christian positions.

B. So what should our response as believers be to a polarizing fellow like Donald Trump? Furthermore, how politically engaged should we be? How much attention should we give to either electing (or possibly removing) a leader of our country? I think Jesus' words to Pilate tell us much about that very thing.

1. All of us begin by saying to Jesus (like Pilate), "Are you the King?" We want to know if he is in charge. Can Christ demand our allegiance or make a real difference? To this query, Christ responds with a question of his own. **"Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"**

a) He wants to know if we will take the risk of believing who he is and all that this entails, or are we simply trying to fit a mold of church, culture, or family.

- b) If he is to be King through our repentance and belief, he will not share the throne with anyone else. Every political party, leader, and personal agenda must be surrendered at the feet of his absolute sovereignty. He has certainly been crowned Lord of all, but yet each Christian must acknowledge that personally.
2. When we come to the realization that Christ is King, we must submit to the order of his kingdom, and not try to bring elements of our own kingdom in. **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** It doesn’t operate by the same rules.
- a) Christ’s kingdom is not about obtaining either power or authority by whatever means. This is unnecessary, since all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth. Jesus’ kingdom operates on a law of love, service and humility; not by dominating and defeating political rivals.
- b) **“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 the world.”** Christians can afford to joyously lay down their political weapons, there is nothing for which we have to fight. Christ is even now putting all of his enemies under his feet! They don’t stand a chance!
- C. In reality, we are citizens of Heaven, not of America! **Philippians 3:19 ESV** **But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.** I say “in reality” because all Christians are easily distracted by things we see around us. But remember the Bible says things that are unseen are more real than the things that are seen.
1. But if we are citizens of heaven, how do we regard our role as Americans? We must remember that we have one king, Jesus, and that he has assigned us here not as citizens, but as ambassadors. **2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV** **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**
- a) Ambassadors live in a foreign locale, but they are not citizens of it. They are placed there to represent the interests of their homeland, and to deliver messages from their government to the natives of the land.
- b) Believers don’t get entangled in the “foreign politics” of this world, because it is not our home. We must maintain a godly distance from all that the people of the world are raving and constantly worrying about.
2. That doesn’t mean we don’t vote or voice opinions. Rather, we are called to promote policies consistent with the welfare of whatever place God has called us to live. When God’s people were sent into exile in Babylon, he told them **Jeremiah 29:7 ESV** **But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**
- D. But as ambassadors of Christ in a foreign world, we are subject to the laws of our true homeland. **Romans 13:8 ESV** **Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** Christ’s law is love!
1. When you routinely call conservatives “fascists”, or those on the left “libtards”, are you fulfilling Christ’s law of love? When you post mocking pictures, memes

and posts of the President or the Speaker of the House, do you imagine Christ chuckling as he dies on the cross out of love?

2. We should speak out against injustice and immoral or unethical behavior, but we are required to do so with love for even those we consider our enemies.

E.1 Timothy 2:1 ESV First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, **2 for kings and all who are in high positions**, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. **3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior**, **4** who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God even wants Trump and Pelosi to be saved!

1. Paul says that we should pray for our leaders in 4 different ways, one of which is Thanksgiving! He then says that this is for our benefit; that our lives will be peaceful and quiet, godly and dignified.

2. But more than that, it's good and it pleases God! Don't you want to please God? His desire is for everyone to be saved and know the truth! If your politician is evil, it's because they aren't saved and don't know the truth.

F. The last thing to remember is that this world as we know it, and every nation on the face of it, is passing away. Paul instructs those who have dealings with this world to live as if they didn't **1 Corinthians 7:31b ESV** "For the present form of this world is passing away." As much as we may value her, and as patriotic as we can be, America is destined to end, along with every other nation.

1. Bible commentator Charles Ellicott puts it this way in his commentary on our text: "(Christ) came to be a witness—a martyr—to the truth, and to send forth others to be witnesses and martyrs to the same truth, through the Holy Spirit, who should guide them into all truth. Such was His kingdom; such the power by which it was to rule. It was not of this world: it possessed neither land nor treasury, neither senate nor legions, neither consuls nor procurators; **but it was to extend its sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth.**"

2. A day is coming when Christ will be enthroned on earth, to rule the universe from a world where all borders, parliaments and constitutions will become unnecessary; dissolved because there will be a perfect, righteous, just Ruler.

IV. In light of this, Peter asks a pertinent question: **2 Peter 3:11 ESV** Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! **13** But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Vote your conscience. Speak up against dishonesty and injustice. But more than that, love everyone. Pray for your leaders. Hold this world loosely as you live lives of holiness and godliness and advance the kingdom's interests. And for the sake of Christ, don't let any political position divide you from your brothers and sisters in his Body!

V.1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

VI. Benediction: **Ephesians 1:16 ESV** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

¹ See: *martyreo*: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G3140&t=KJV>

² <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/december-web-only/trump-should-be-removed-from-office.html>