

## JOHN 18:33-37

### MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

**I**n the midst of darkness, God's glory blazes. When evil appears to triumph, grace prevails. When dark denizens of this fallen world imagine they have defeated grace, righteousness conquers. These inspiring themes are written large in accounts provided of the brief, tumultuous hours leading to the Crucifixion of our Lord; and they are again emphasised by His Resurrection from the dead. Christ the Lord conquered death, forever setting free all who look to Him for salvation. Christ the Lord is alive; and because He lives, we too will live [cf. **JOHN 14:19**], when we have received His sacrifice in our place. He gave His life because of our helpless condition. Now, He calls all who will receive Him as Master over life to freedom.

Paul wrote of the reality of our present situation in his letter to the Christians in Colossae. "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" [**COLOSSIANS 2:8-15**].<sup>1</sup>

The scene portrayed in the text played out almost two millennia past. In the Praetorium, Pilate's headquarters, the Roman Prefect is seated on his judgement seat. Before this minor functionary who rules a small Roman protectorate stands a nondescript man of about thirty years of age. Because he is a prisoner, the man is bound [see **MARK 15:1**], armed guards watching his every move. The man was seized by armed men dispatched by the Jewish Council. There had been a hastily called quasi-hearing, more of a kangaroo court than anything, before that same Council. Then, the man was sent to Pilate. Pilate felt he had no jurisdiction over the case, so he had sent the prisoner to Herod. Herod gave what was at best a cursory examination, more out of curiosity than seriously seeking answers, before sending him back to Pilate. The entire time, the chief priests and scribes had moved from court-to-court, clamouring for the prisoner to be executed. Now, the man, unusually calm and unnaturally quiet, stands again before Pilate.

"Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?' 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.' 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'" [**JOHN 18:33-37**].

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD** — The principle guiding all the kingdoms of this world can be described by one word—"self." Mankind's interests inevitably lead to the self; we hold exalted opinions concerning our own person, concerning our nationality, concerning our culture, concerning our race and even concerning the Faith to which we adhere. That we overestimate our own importance (and the importance of all with which we are associated) should be no surprise since the first temptation mankind experienced was through appeal to the self. John warns all who would follow the Master, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world" [1 JOHN 2:15, 16 NET BIBLE].

When the Apostle of Love penned the cautionary statement just read, he may well have had in mind our first parents plunging the race into ruin. You no doubt recall that "[The serpent] said to our first mother, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" [GENESIS 3:1b-6].

When the Master was tempted by the devil, each of the temptations appealed to the self. Those temptations are recorded in LUKE 4:1-12. "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God,  
and him only shall you serve."

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,  
to guard you,"

and

"On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone."

And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

The kingdoms of this world are preoccupied with issues that stroke the self. The prevailing philosophy of this world can be summed up by the phrase “If it feels good, do it.” Whatever appeals to the individual, even transiently, is elevated to become the *summum bonum* of life. We have witnessed during the past several decades a regression to an attitude more than three thousand years old to a distant time when “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” [JUDGES 17:6b]. The kingdoms of this world have always been set in opposition to righteousness and opposed to the ardent pursuit of godliness. For brief periods throughout human history, a few societies have inclined briefly toward heavenly righteousness. However, these movements have never been sustained, and they inevitably conclude with return to exaltation of the self.

Western societies were influenced for good by the Reformation in Europe and in England. When British society again slid into self-exalted dissipation, God raised up the Wesley brothers and Whitefield to revive the nation. Their preaching sparked revival even on the American frontier. Throughout much of the history of the New World, the virtues arising from these revivals were faith, hope and sacrificial love; these virtues in turn resulted in lives marked by courage, loyalty, honour and integrity. Thus, we modeled our lives after men and women who were faithful to their marriage vows, parents who sacrificed so that their children could have a better life, employees who took a stand for right rather than pursuing what was expedient.

The times have changed. After a period when western society has been generally characterised by biblical morality, the pendulum has swung back, culture is moving rapidly to embrace expressive individualism. Now, courts redefine morality—the wisdom of the centuries and the righteousness that characterised past generations is rejected and ridiculed by black-robed tyrants, cheered on by unheeding masses who seek to impose ancient immoralities on mankind.

Instead of esteeming faithful husbands and wives, we cannot wait to read the latest antics of some coarse, serial adulterer who thrusts himself forward hoping to become the most powerful individual in the land. We laud a woman who consistently lies about guarding the secrets of a nation and who shrinks from standing firm in the face of evil. We turn serial murderers who slaughter the unborn *in utero* into ghastly champions of women’s choice. No matter that the voiceless victims number in the millions and the parents who should have protected these little ones are racked with guilt, forever grieving the death of the innocents. The justification for such evil is a new ethic—an ethic as old as the serpent’s hiss, an ethic that holds as the highest principle personal autonomy. Therefore, at the heart of this brave, new world is a society marked by self-indulgence and self-determination; it is the ultimate exaltation of the self.

Contemporary culture trains the populace to be non-judgemental. In the estimate of Millennials, and perhaps in the view of most people, the worst thing in the world is that one should be “intolerant.” Tolerance is the supreme liberal virtue. Liberal people take pride in their tolerance—tolerance which displays itself through intolerance toward conservative moral values. Never mind that we want the physician to be intolerant of invasive microbes. We want the pilot of the plane on which we are flying to be intolerant concerning directions—we want to arrive where we paid to go. We want the farmer to be intolerant concerning what is sprayed on the grains to be harvested for our tables. Fads are seldom rational; and this fad is no exception.

What is amazing about this current craze of “tolerance,” is that we are not tolerant at all—actually, we are indifferent or resigned. To be tolerant of a situation, an individual must disapprove of a given action and must have power to stop the situation. While many people may disapprove of immoral behaviour, few people actually have the power to stop immorality in the modern world. Thus, we moderns are either shown to be indifferent to immoral behaviour or we have resigned ourselves to the evil because we believe we can do nothing about it.

Christians are caught up in this strange grand kabuki theatre that has invaded our society. We have bought into the idea that we can ensure that our values prevail in society through electing the “right” politician. So, we organise people of like mind and faith to elect people who promise to impose something resembling the Kingdom of Heaven on people who obviously are not members of that Kingdom. Since politicians appear to have difficulty imposing any moral code on themselves, surely we have to know that such a strategy is doomed from the start. Nevertheless, Christians appear to believe that the creation of more laws will transform society. If Christians are now uncomfortable with the new culture that embraces ancient immorality, we should ask why we were comfortable in the first place!

Church leaders demonstrate that they have bought into this lie that they can influence the world to act righteously. They rush to pray over every brewery dedication, imagine that having a politician seated in the congregation means they are accomplishing something of eternal worth, delude themselves into thinking that because they have a large viewing audience or preaching from ornate pulpits that they have influence and a voice capable of turning society toward God. May I say quite clearly that all such church leaders are self-deluded at best. The illusion of wealth and high visibility cannot transform a darkened society into one that is righteous.

Long years past, God condemned Jerusalem because His people imagined they were serving Him though living lives indistinguishable from the world. God charged that not only were they wicked and idolatrous, but that they had become an embarrassment even to the pagans about them. Therefore, we read, “Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes” [EZEKIEL 5:5, 6].

In the presidential primaries of our neighbours to the south, I hear constant allusions to the power of “evangelicals” as a voting bloc. The faithful have been reduced to a “voting bloc!” Interestingly, as the evangelical voting bloc grows larger, society becomes increasingly secular. Religious people willingly support wickedness so long as that evil person they are supporting promises to give them a partial loaf of whatever vile product he or she is peddling.

Why are the professed people of God so willing to participate in wickedness? It may be that they are unknowingly members of the kingdom of darkness rather than the Kingdom of God. Expressive individualism leads to lives that are worse than the lives of the pagans about us. A recent report concludes, “Adherence to conservative religious beliefs without attending church regularly is associated with worse family outcomes, whereas combining adherence with regular attendance is associated with better family outcomes.”<sup>2</sup> In short, profession of faith in the Risen Christ without a transformed life may be worse than no professed faith at all. The reason is that the one professing faith without transformation causes the pagan world to ridicule the Faith. They conclude, with some justification, that Christians are phonies!

We Christians appear to have forgotten that our Master said, “My Kingdom does not belong to this world” [JOHN 18:36]<sup>3</sup>! Rather than investing ourselves so fully into that which is passing away, we would be better advised to lift our eyes to see that which is eternal and that which can never be shaken! Christians must cease attempting to build the kingdoms of man.

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<sup>2</sup> W. Bradford Wilcox, Nicholas H. Wolfinger and Charles E. Stokes, “The Role of Culture in Declining Marriage Rates,” Family Studies, March 10, 2016, [http://family-studies.org/the-role-of-culture-in-declining-marriage-rates/?utm\\_content=buffer480bf&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://family-studies.org/the-role-of-culture-in-declining-marriage-rates/?utm_content=buffer480bf&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer), accessed 25 March 2016

<sup>3</sup> **The Everyday Bible: New Century Version** (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 2005)

It is as though we Christians believed that we could adopt the attitudes of the world and the world would love us. We have assuredly forgotten that the Master also told those who would follow Him, “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” [JOHN 15:19].

I can only wonder how Peter would have responded to the modern drive to elect the right people. Recall that Peter wrote to Christians scattered by the ruling authorities of his own day, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” [1 PETER 2:9-12].

Likewise, Paul called Christians to “aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man” [2 CORINTHIANS 8:21]. He urged believers in the Lord Jesus to be “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” [PHILIPPIANS 2:15]. Writing Titus, he insisted, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us” [TITUS 2:7, 8].

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD** — “Jesus answered [Pilate], ‘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’” [JOHN 18:36, 37].

Throughout the Old Testament are statements testifying to the reign of God. When God delivered Israel from the pursuing Egyptians, Moses led the people of Israel in singing a song to the LORD. That song concluded with this testimony: “The LORD will reign forever and ever” [EXODUS 15:18]. The NINTH PSALM contains this affirmation of God’s reign.

“The LORD sits enthroned forever;  
he has established his throne for justice,  
and he judges the world with righteousness;  
he judges the peoples with uprightness.”

[PSALM 9:7, 8]

God built the Davidic Kingdom which continued for a finite period. However, God repeatedly spoke of a coming kingdom over which David’s son would reign. As an example of this promise, recall the words delivered by Isaiah in the twenty-fourth chapter of his prophecy.

“The LORD of hosts reigns  
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,  
and his glory will be before his elders.”

[ISAIAH 24: 23b]

Included among the promises of the LORD's reign on earth is this one, also found in Isaiah's prophecy.

“Behold, a king will reign in righteousness,  
and princes will rule in justice.  
Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,  
a shelter from the storm,  
like streams of water in a dry place,  
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.”

[ISAIAH 32:1, 2]

Projecting into the future, I note multiplied prophecies delivered by multiple writers of Holy Writ.<sup>4</sup> Among the final prophecies are numerous statements pointing to the reign of God on earth. Describing the judgements that are to rain down on the earth, John describes the last of the Trumpet Judgements with stunning words. The Revelator has written, “The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever’”

[REVELATION 11:15].

Then John describes the scene that shall be witnessed immediately before the millennial reign of Christ the Lord begins. Before the lost are called before the Great Assize we know as the Great White Throne, John speaks of reign of redeemed saints with the Saviour whom they have loved and served. “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. 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 ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years” [REVELATION 20:4-6].

Whenever I am called upon to lay to rest the bodies of God's saints, it is my practise to read the words that have encouraged the people of God since the day that John penned them. The funeral will have concluded and we have that solemn moment in which we inter the mortal remains of our beloved fellow saint. As the coffin is lowered into the ground, I read, “The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” [REVELATION 22:1-5].

Throughout the Word of God are instances when God draws aside the veil separating time from eternity, and we are permitted opportunity to peer into heaven itself. There, we see the Lord God reigning in heaven. Now, He is seated on that heavenly throne. Yet, there is coming a day in which those who have been redeemed out of the earth will reign with Him. We who have believed shall be seated on thrones, and we shall reign with Him.

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<sup>4</sup> See JEREMIAH 23:5, 6; OBADIAH 21; MICAH 4:6, 7

However, throughout the Gospels the Master spoke of an eternal Kingdom now present. When the Master began His ministry in Israel, His message was, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel” [MARK 1:15]. After being tempted by the devil and after John had been thrown into prison, Matthew informs his readers of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” [MATTHEW 4:17].

When Jesus sent the seventy-two disciples to go throughout Israel, they were appointed to announce the Kingdom of God. The account of their appointment states, “The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace be to this house!” And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, “Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near”’” [LUKE 10:1-11].

Some seek to discover a difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. However, the terms appear to be synonymous. Fifty-three times Jesus is recorded as speaking of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels. The majority of those occasions are recorded by Mark and Luke. Thirty-two times Jesus is recorded as speaking of the kingdom of heaven; all these occurrences are found in Matthew’s Gospel written to speak especially to the Jew. The term “Kingdom of Heaven” does not occur outside the Gospel of Matthew, though the “Kingdom of God” occurs fourteen times in the Letters Paul wrote. What is important is that Jesus spoke of the immediate presence of the Kingdom.

That eternal Kingdom is both “now” and “not yet.” Now, Christ reigns over a people who though living in this world are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. We who have faith in the Risen Saviour know that “our citizenship is in heaven” [see PHILIPPIANS 3:20]. Now, though we Christians are residing temporarily within the kingdoms of man, we are appointed to serve as “ambassadors for Christ” [see 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20].

As Christians, we are commanded to reflect the glory of our Father, honouring His Name. We are known as followers of the Christ because we let our light shine before others; they see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven [see MATTHEW 5:16]. Christians love their neighbours and love their enemies as well; we pray for those who persecute us. In this way we honour our Father in heaven [see MATTHEW 5:44, 45]. Christians endeavour to do the will of the Father in heaven [see MATTHEW 7:21]. This is how we live in the Kingdom of God. We are differentiated from those living in the kingdoms of man by the manner in which we live.

The marks of the citizen of heaven are readily recognised; they cannot be ignored. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven are responsible to “Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the [government]” [1 PETER 2:17]. As citizens of the Kingdom of God we “Love one another with brotherly affection”; we “Outdo one another in showing honour” [ROMANS 12:10]. These things we do, not in order to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven; rather, we live in this manner because we *are* citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is true that we are “receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” [see **HEBREWS 12:28a**]. Therefore, we are grateful, and we “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe” [see **HEBREWS 12:28b**]. Nevertheless, we who are born from above are now citizens of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is far greater than any of us dare imagine; we are not waiting for it to be revealed—it has been revealed and we now are citizens of this Kingdom. We are Canadians, or perhaps we are Americans; yet, through faith in the Son of God, we are Christians.

We are deeply offended when an evil man shoots and kills one of our soldiers standing guard over the Centennial Flame in our nation’s capital or when a wicked individual in the name of his evil god kills one of our soldiers by driving into him with an automobile. All Canadians are offended when an RCMP officer serving our nation is murdered. Two hundred thirty-six members of the RCMP have died in the line of duty; fifteen members of this force have been murdered during the past fifteen years. As Canadians, we feel keenly the death of each member who has been murdered. How much greater should be the offence seizing us when wicked people assault our brothers and sisters, enslaving them, torturing them, killing them! Christians who remember their heavenly citizenship take seriously the biblical admonition that commands, “Weep with those who weep” [see **ROMANS 12:15**].

And just as we take that one admonition seriously, as citizens of this eternal kingdom we heed the remainder of that divine command. Though we may be unable to relieve the hurt and injury of those who now weep, we remember their sorrow before our God as we ask Him to relieve their pain and to hold to account those who pursue these wicked deeds. Then, we add power to our requests by living out these instructions in our daily lives.

These instructions, given in **ROMANS 12:9-21**, have become the statement of purpose for the faithful. “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

These define the character of twice-born citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. We do not act according to this standard in order to be citizens of the eternal Kingdom; we act thusly because we *are* citizens of the Kingdom. This must be said in a day when many who profess the Faith live lives that cannot be distinguished from those who know only the kingdoms of man. That the Kingdom of God is now present has been made known by an exchange between the Master and religious leaders of His day. You may recall this account in Luke’s Gospel. “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God will come, [Jesus] answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with something observable; no one will say, “Look here!” or “There!” For you see, the kingdom of God is among you”’ [**LUKE 17:20, 21**]<sup>5</sup>. The Kingdom of God is now here; and those who have been born into this eternal kingdom demonstrate their citizenship through lives that have been transformed by the power of the Risen Son of God.

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<sup>5</sup> **The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2009)



**FOR THIS REASON HE WAS BORN** — “Pilate said to [Jesus], ‘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’” [**JOHN 18:37**].

It is Easter; of course, we remember the Resurrection of our Saviour. We remember that though He was buried in weakness, He was raised in power. Jesus our Master is “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead” [**ROMANS 1:4**]. We sometimes say that the Lord was born to die—this is a true statement so far as it goes. However, in His testimony before the Imperial Legate, Jesus averred that He was born to reign. Jesus “gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works” [**TITUS 2:14**].

Though He endured a phony trial and gross injustice from the religious leaders, Jesus was not murdered; though His life was taken from Him [see **ACTS 8:33**], the Romans did not murder the Master. Christ Jesus our Lord sacrificed Himself that we might live. Underscore that thought in your mind—Jesus the Son of God gave Himself because of our weakness. I find great comfort in the words the Apostle has penned in the Letter to Roman Christians. “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” [**ROMANS 5:6-11**]. Therefore, the Master is calling out from the kingdoms of this world a people for His Name.

Now, in Christ, through faith in His Name, we declare to all people who have believed, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” [**1 PETER 2:9, 10**].

When we were yet in darkness, not having believed the message of life in the Son of God, though citizens of one of the kingdoms of man, “We were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” [**EPHESIANS 2:12**].

The verses following that verse just referenced are a comfort to the redeemed of God. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” [**EPHESIANS 2:13-22**].

**JOHN 18:33-37**  
**MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD**

I must ask this question of each one listening to the message for this day, Are you a citizen of God's Eternal Kingdom? Have you entered into the Kingdom of Heaven? None may enter into this glorious kingdom except for those who have been born from above. Do you bear the marks of the citizen of this Eternal Kingdom in your life? I am not asking if you are a church member; neither am I asking whether you have participated in religious rites of some communion. I am asking whether you have received that new life which is the heritage of each one who has placed faith in the Risen Son of God.

The Word of God encourages us, "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" [ROMANS 5:17].

Again, the Word of God declares, "As sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" [ROMANS 5:21]. That eternal Kingdom of which Christ spoke is revealed to those who have received citizenship in His Kingdom. I pray that this includes you. If we have been born into this glorious kingdom, we are able to say with the Master, "My kingdom is not of this world." Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> We pray for a blessed and glorious Easter for each one reading this message.