

Title – Kingdoms in Conflict

I want to take one sentence from our text this morning and unfold its terrible content from a number of New Testament verses. The sentence is verse 19, especially the second half, “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” That is simply a stunning! “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Satan has power and the whole world is under his power. Is this the way you see and understand what the world is? Do you understand that satanic global power influences the entire world? John says, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” “Lies” means the world is under the power of Satan.

Wow! This is what Christians are up against and this is where Christians live. Christians are not to just be aware of Satan’s power, we are not to be taken by surprise, but we are vulnerable to it. What does this mean for us? Let me say simply if “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” then Satan is over many of the rulers of this world and this world is an evil place to live and we live in an evil time. This view has been confirmed for every generation of believers since Christ came, by what the Scriptures tells us, by what history shows us and by what we see unfolding this very day throughout the world.

To illustrate what I am saying, let me take you back just 28 years. Here are some of the major world events of 1988:

- Pan-Am flight blown up by a terrorist bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland

resulting in hundreds of deaths.

- US Navy shoots down Iranian airliner by mistake killing 290 people
- Bush defeat Dukakis for President
- Federal Debt 2.6 Trillion
- France and China permit the “morning after” pill
- Iraq and Iran war ends – 1.5 million dead
- Iraq turns their focus and attack Kurds with poison gas
- USA has new drug called “Crack”

In this same year Charles Colson publishes a book called *Kingdoms in Conflict*. Colson’s concern was how Christians should live out their faith in the public areas of work and politics where there is much evil. This sermon shares the same title as Colson’s book, *Kingdoms in Conflict*. However, I want to focus on something different. Colson’s emphasis was on the conflict between the kingdom of God and what he called the kingdoms of man. I want to go behind the kingdoms of man and talk about the conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

This message is heavy on Scripture this morning because the power is in the Word of God and not in me – I am but the preacher of Christ’s gospel and His servant. Those with an ear to hear, now hear the Word of God.

Kingdom vs. kingdom

Most of the world simply does not accept or believe there are spiritual kingdoms. Let’s take time to define what a kingdom and kingdoms are and what this means for us. In Matthew 12:26 Jesus speaks of kingdoms, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is

divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?” Jesus makes it clear that Satan does have a kingdom. Jesus says since Satan’s kingdom is divided it will not stand referring to its collapse after Jesus returns. He does not say it will not stand for a period of time or it will not have influence in the world, but that it will not stand forever. Two verses later Jesus says, “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (v.28) Here it is clear that there is a kingdom of God and because of the ministry of Jesus “the kingdom of God has come upon you!” It is also clear that these two kingdoms are in conflict. Jesus’ coming into the world was the decisive blow that limited Satan, but Satan will not be completely and permanently defeated until Jesus returns. The battle continues; in 2015 USA national debt exceeds 18 trillion, homosexual marriage is made legal and Obama Care has gone bankrupt in 16 states. Internationally, several European countries are on the verge of financial collapse and there are at least 10 wars and dozens of major military conflicts around the world with millions dying. Terrorist’s attacks continue to escalate with thousands dying on 3 continents. If Jesus had not come the evil would be far greater than it is. Even though this is hard to imagine, it is true that God is limiting evil. Evil is restrained, but at the same time evil shows people their desperate need for a Savior, Jesus the Christ, who is the only way back to God.

Considering the influence of evil in the world, I would like to ask some questions. What are Christians up against in this world? Why is the kingdom of God so crucial? Why do we need supernatural power in living life and serving in ministry? Why is love and compassion not the norm in this world?

Both the world and even some that identify themselves as Christian work to get

believers to believe the false. Jesus said clearly, “See that no one leads you astray.⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.” (Matthew 24:4-8) We understand that we are moving through history toward the climax of Jesus’ return and final victory and this journey will be difficult.

Kingdom Battle in this “Present Evil Age”

John says in his letter, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19) Paul wrote in Galatians, “The Lord Jesus Christ,⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.” (Galatians 1:3-4) Both John and Paul call the age that Christians live in until Jesus returns simply as “evil.” “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one” and so Jesus “delivers us from the present evil age.” To the believers in Ephesus, Paul wrote, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15-16) The days are evil, we live in the present evil age and the world lies in evil because of the power of the evil one. As a new believer, coming to Christ in 1986 I had no idea of the spiritual war between good and evil, between God’s angels and the devil’s demons, the battle for the very souls of people. Frank Peretti wrote a novel, “*This Present Darkness*” that brought to my mind this epic war and even though it was a novel, it painted a clear picture of the spiritual war waging all around us in this present evil age. This is scary and if unbelievers understood the power of evil in this world they would run to Christ for

He is the only hope. Our hope does not lie in politicians and world governments for their ambition is self-serving and therefore influenced by the kingdom of the evil one. Where is our hope as believers?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Colossi of where their hope is found, “May you be strengthened with all power, according to his Christ’s glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:11-14)

When we are converted to believers in Christ we are “delivered us from the domain of darkness” and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ. The consequence of Jesus rising from the dead and ultimately defeating Satan is that this age is ruled by the “domain of darkness” for a time, but during this time believers are no longer part of this evil world and we are Christ’s light in this evil age of darkness and we are no longer under the influence of the dark and evil master called Satan. As Christians we are delivered from this evil kingdom and it no longer has authority or power over us. Satan’s influence can tempt us, it can grieve us, it can cause some pain, but it has not lasting power over a believer. We cannot not lose heaven.

If we look at the New Testament descriptions of Satan we quickly see what the Apostles called him. Paul referred to Satan as “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4) Paul called Satan “the god of this world”, so it is not surprising that if the “god of this world” is

behind the evil in this world. Satan would be called the “god of this world” as most people are living in this present darkness under the influence of Satan. Paul also wrote in Ephesians, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:1-2) Satan is called the “ prince of the power of the air.” I don't know any better way to interpret what Paul wrote here other than literally - the air we breathe and the atmosphere in which we live and move is permeated by a personal evil power, the “ prince of the power of the air.” The whole world, as John wrote, lies under this evil power. That power has a prince or a ruler who John called here “the prince of the power of the air.” This prince shapes the powerful patterns of every present age and seems to do this mainly by working “in the sons of disobedience.” Satan somehow fills the whole atmosphere, the very air with his power, but he is specifically at work inside those who walk in disobedience to Christ. Satan has the greatest freedom to “work” in humans that are most ready to disobey the will of God.

The “prince of the power of the air” had sway over the world after the fall except where God interceded. With the advent of the Messiah, Jesus, He tells us with His own words, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:31-32) Jesus came into the world so people would know their need for salvation through the Messiah. John continues to record the words of Christ, “the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.” (John 14:30-31) Jesus speaks of the ruler of this world having his way for a period

of time and during this time those called by God will be drawn to Jesus. Therefore, when 1 John 5:19 says, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” we understand that the “evil one” is the “ruler of this world” or the “god of this world” and permeates everything as the “prince of the power of the air” for a time to serve God’s purpose and plan for salvation. I am sad it must be this way, and do not completely understand why it has to be this way, but I believe God has a purpose and plan that will come to fruition no matter how hard Satan works to stop it.

Kingdom World View

Give me a second to stop and catch my breath. I don’t know about you but this has been a lot to take in. My beloved, do you understand that if you believe these things, you embrace a worldview that is radically different from the worldview of our society? Do you see that you view the world very differently than most of the people you live around and work with? No wonder Christians are often at odds with America and with the world! Do you see the world as the scriptures view it? If you do not, then, the truth is you are just giving lip service to the authority of the Bible. Do you see that the ruler, the prince, the god of business, industry, commerce, politics, education, the arts, recreation and entertainment is none other than Satan! The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. This is what we are up against. We need clear, discerning judgment to know how we should then live and minister. How as Christians we can influence business, industry, politics, education, arts, etc. to bring light into a dark and evil world.

On one hand the scriptures says, Jesus defeats Satan. “Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” (John 12:31) In John chapter 16 Jesus says, “the ruler of this

world is judged.” (v.11) The writer of Hebrews wrote, **“Through death he Jesus might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”** (Hebrews 2:14) Or as Paul said in Colossians, **“He God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him Christ.”** (Colossians 2:15) These are in fact gloriously true statements about the decisive victory that was won by the Lord Jesus when He died and rose again.

But, on the other hand the scriptures say Satan is the god of this world. **“Peter said,”** in Acts 5:3, **“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.”** Paul wrote several times that one of the problems the early church was having - was knowing who was truly of Christ, **“for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”** (2 Corinthians 11:14) Paul warned believers that, **“The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:9) We can see there is a tension in the scriptures and it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that because the decisive battle has been fought and won by Christ, that therefore, the war is over. The evil one is still active, for a time, even though and his ultimate defeat happened when Jesus died and rose to defeat sin and death. Jesus prayed to God the Father, **“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.”** (John 17:14-15) God protects believers so they may have influence in this dark world by their lives and even by their deaths. The world hates believers because Satan, at this point, still rules the world as the **“prince of the power of the air.”** However, Jesus gave us a relationship with God the Father who keeps Satan from taking our salvation.

As we work our way through the scriptures on Sunday mornings we clearly see the victory we have in Christ. John made this clear, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:3-5) The Scriptures show us how to live and advance the kingdom while living in this corrupt world. Paul knew the power received from Christ, through the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God gives to the saints, “May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:11-14) It is the Scriptures that teach us how to have joy even in times of trouble and persecution. God will give you the courage and strength to withstand all persecution.

I want to focus in our remaining time on Satan’s opposition to Christians actively evangelizing.

Kingdom Under Attack

The most compassionate and loving thing you can do for any person is to lead them into eternal life and joy through faith in Christ. To feed, clothe, heal, house, and educate a person without a view to their being converted to Christ is not truly loving, any more than merely giving a person pain killers for their fever is loving when you could offer them the antibiotic that would take the infection away.

Therefore, feeding, clothing, healing, housing, and educating are good services, but they become truly an act of love when the gospel message is included. So evangelism and world missions are the centerpieces of a compassionate church. When the disciples asked Jesus when He would restore God's kingdom, He answered them saying, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8) We do not know when Jesus will return, but until He does He has commanded us to "be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." In order to be His effective witnesses Jesus said, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." So as a believer you have what you need to be an effective witness for Christ - so – what are you waiting for? My beloved, you have been given supernatural power to fulfill Christ's mission for your life – living the gospel and sharing of the gospel! You are to live supernaturally in this world!

Because we have supernatural power it is no wonder why Satan will actively oppose any efforts we make to evangelize. How does Satan work to keep us from fulfilling Christ's command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

I will give you five (5) examples. These are not the only ways Satan works to either discourage us or slow us down or prevent us from being obedient to Christ. Satan is clever and make no mistake, we are in the midst of spiritual war. We are to engage the enemy by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us by Christ.

First, Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) Even before we arrive to share the saving gospel of Christ, Satan is employing his power to deaden and blind the minds of the unsaved. We must seek the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to overcome Satan’s effect on those who are of this lost world.

Second, we learn from the parable found in Matthew, “As he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them...¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.” (Matthew 13:4 and 19) Once the process of evangelism has begun, Satan increases his efforts. He is pictured as a flock of birds swooping down on the seed of the gospel that fell on a path. He tries his best to take away the Word that is preached so that no serious thought is given to it. He may use radio or TV or crying babies or squabbling spouses or broken cars or pressures at work or difficulty in paying the bills or for men sexy ads and billboards. Anything to take the Word out of our memory, out of our consideration and make it so we do not see or hear. This is why Satan hates meditation. He does not want believers seeking God’s power and insight and wisdom found in the Bible and prayer. He does not want unbelievers seeking the answer to what is the purpose for life, why are we here and is there a God?

Third, Satan does deceptive signs and wonders. As Jesus was explaining to the disciples what the world would be like after His resurrection until He came back,

He said, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:24) Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) Satan has always been a great imitator. When the rod of Aaron turned into a snake as a sign of God's power in Exodus chapter 7, the Egyptian sorcerers turned their rods into snakes too by their secret arts. One reason the new age fads are sweeping so many away in our day is that they are not just fads, but they have real satanic power behind them and there will be signs and wonders worked not just by God but by Satan also and people will be deceived. In Revelation God defines Satan as, “That ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” (Revelation 12:9) Satan has power to deceive but God has given us His power to bring forth His truth and light.

Fourth, Satan uses and manipulates people to thwart others from believing the truth of Christ. In Acts 13 we find Barnabas and Paul had been sent out from Antioch and they arrived on the Island of Cyprus. Paul and Barnabas with the help of John were preaching the gospel all over the island. The Roman proconsul summoned them and was eager to hear the gospel. However, there was a Jewish false prophet and magician named Elymas and he “opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” But God had empowered Paul and he said to Elymas, “ ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.’ Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and

he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.” The result of Paul’s faithful preaching of the Word was, ¹² “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” (Acts 13:8 & 10-12) Notice it was not Paul’s power, but the power of God working through Paul. Paul turns to face Elymas and calls him “son of the devil.” In the parable of the wheat and tares or weeds found in Matthew 13, Jesus said, “The weeds are the sons of the evil one.” (Matthew 13:8) So Elymas was a weed of Satan sown into a strategic place to thwart the faith of a possible new believer. Paul responds with supernatural power “you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time!” We must be faithful like Paul in spite of the opposition of Satan and preach the gospel for the power is in God and His Word. Be careful whom you call “friend” and be careful you do not let people who are spiritual weeds into your life. We should expect Satan to oppose the gospel at every turn. Therefore, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:11-12) In 1 Thessalonians Paul writes of his desire for he and his band of brothers to return and see the saints in Thessalonica and then adds, but time and time again Satan hindered us. Satan uses people to hinder believers.

Fifth, Satan persecutes faithful Christians. He is not worried about Christians who are lukewarm for they are no threat to him. Jesus told John, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10) I believe this is what

Peter had in mind when he wrote, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9) Satan watches for and seeks out those desiring to bring honor to Christ and be witnesses of Christ and those preaching the gospel because it is these saints who are a threat. Are you a threat to Satan? You should be! The Scripture teaches, We are to be soldiers for Christ in the battles that will rage until He returns and the war is finished for all eternity.

Kingdom Armed for Battle

What we have looked at this morning was meant to illustrate what it means, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” that John wrote in 1 John 5:19. What true Christians are battling against is a global power, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience,” (Ephesians 2:2) that touches and in some measure influences or controls all culture and societies throughout the world. This power is not opposed by most in the world. People can eat, sleep, work, live and make merry as long as they do not oppose this power that has mankind in a downward spiral. But, but, the devil is extraordinarily opposed to the King of compassion and the advancement of His gospel. Satan blinds and he snatches the Word away and he deceives people with signs and wonders and he uses people to hinder other people from coming to faith and he thwarts missionary efforts and he persecutes and throws believers into prison and he influences the martyring of the saints.

If we are going to make headway against the kingdom of Satan, it means war. It

means a conflict of kingdoms. It means learning the meaning of living out the kingdom of God in the world and how to exercise God's power. It means arming ourselves for battle. In Paul's closing to the saints in Ephesus he wrote, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

(Ephesians 6:10-13) My beloved, we are at war! Prepare and do battle for our most holy Savior, our Lord Jesus! Remember and trust the Word given to John by the Holy Spirit, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them ("them" meaning sin and the prince of the power of the air), for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4) Please stand with me and let us say together, "for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Praise God! Amen and Amen!