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“Two Kingdoms in Conflict”

Colossians 1:1–14

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The Bible explains the existence of two kingdoms—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Every person in the world belongs to one of those kingdoms. They are not earthly kingdoms, but they are real, spiritual dominions. The question is, to which kingdom do you belong?

## 1. Context

### a. Colosse, the city

- i. Colosse, also called Colossae, was an ancient city in Turkey.
- ii. It was about 100 miles east of the ancient city of Ephesus and about 350 miles south of Istanbul.
- iii. It was situated along a trade route in the Lycus Valley till it was destroyed by an earthquake in the 1st century A.D.

### b. Colossians, the letter

- i. Paul wrote to the church in Colosse while in prison in Rome around 60–61 A.D.
  1. This was only one of the many prison epistles Paul wrote during that time.
- ii. **Colossians 1:7** mentions Epaphras, who is thought to be the founding pastor of the church at Colosse.
- iii. **Colossians 2:1** implies that Paul had never visited Colosse.
- iv. Paul wrote this letter to address an unknown heresy that taught Christ alone was not sufficient for salvation.
  1. There were two main aspects of this heresy.
    - a. It denied the Trinity being embodied in Christ.
    - b. It denied the Christian was complete in Christ.
  2. Paul addressed three aspects of this heresy.
    - a. Greek philosophy, because it claimed only the spiritually enlightened had the secret knowledge and depth of insight to accept this heresy.
    - b. Jewish legalism, because it claimed Christians needed to add works to their faith to be saved.
    - c. Eastern mysticism, because it included the worship of angels and considered them mediators between man and God.
- v. Paul wrote Colossians out of love, to bring the Colossian Believers' focus back to the centrality and supremacy of Christ.

2. **Colossians 1:1-14** – “[1] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; [5] because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; [7] as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, [8] who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. [9] For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [10] that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; [12] giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. [13] He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, [14] in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

3. The two kingdoms

a. Verses 12–14 speak about two kingdoms that are not earthly, but are real.

i. The kingdom of light

1. The kingdom of light is God's domain.
2. It is where Jesus rules.
3. It is where truth triumphs.
4. It leads to life.
5. You can be born again into it by faith.

ii. The kingdom of darkness

1. The kingdom of darkness is Satan's domain.
2. It is where evil rules.
3. It is where deception dominates.
4. It leads to death.
5. You are born into it.

b. The question for every person is, to which kingdom do you belong?

i. Everyone is subject to one of these two kingdoms.

1. While everyone is born into the kingdom of darkness, Paul emphasized that those who surrender to Christ move from the name of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

- c. The Bible makes literal and metaphorical/spiritual references to these two kingdoms.
  - i. **Genesis 1:1-5** is the first Biblical reference to light and darkness.
    - 1. **Genesis 1** is a literal creation account of how God made the world.
    - 2. If you stumble on **Genesis 1:1**, you will stumble on the rest of the Bible. But if you believe **Genesis 1:1**, you will believe the rest of the Bible.
    - 3. **Genesis 1:1-5** – “[1] In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. [3] Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. [4] And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. [5] God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.”
  - ii. The literal light and dark help us understand the metaphorical/spiritual use of light (good) and dark (evil).
    - 1. **2 Corinthians 4:6** – “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
    - 2. **1 Thessalonians 5:5-8** – “[5] You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. [8] But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”
    - 3. Followers of Christ should imitate Jesus by walking in the light.
    - 4. **DISCUSS**: Have you put on the whole armor of God? What does this look like in practice?
  - iii. The concept of light and darkness symbolizing good and evil is not a novel idea and is understood by the culture.
- d. Hollywood adopted the themes of light and darkness from the Bible and portrayed these themes in many movies.
  - i. The light represents what is good and godly.
  - ii. The dark represents what is wrong and sinful.
- e. The battle between the two kingdoms is not a fight between equals.
  - i. Darkness must flee at the presence of the Light.

1. **DISCUSS:** What does **1 John 4:4** tell you about the result of the battle between the two kingdoms? How does this verse provide you with hope in a troubled world?

#### 4. Two domains

##### a. The kingdom of light is God's domain.

- i. **1 Timothy 6:16** – Paul described God as the one *“who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.”*
- ii. **1 John 1:5** – *“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”*
  1. Gamma rays, microwaves, radar, and most other forms of light are invisible to the human eye.
  2. Humans only see 0.0035 percent of the light spectrum.
  3. God is part of the invisible light spectrum.
  4. Jesus is God, the invisible light made visible by wrapping Himself in flesh.
  5. **Colossians 1:15** – *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”*
  6. **DISCUSS:** How has Jesus made God visible to us?

##### b. The kingdom of darkness is Satan's domain.

- i. **Ephesians 5:11-12** – *“[11] Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.”* (1984 NIV)
  1. Satan operates in a way to keep sin in secret and keep a person in bondage.
  2. When we confess, we step into the light and become vulnerable, but also free from the bondage of secrecy.
- ii. **2 Corinthians 4:3-4** – *“[3] But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [4] whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*
  1. Satan is the god of this age.
  2. The reason a lot of people are in darkness is because Satan has blinded them.
  3. We need to be praying for our unsaved friends and family to “see the light.”
  4. **2 Corinthians 11:14** says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light to deceive the world.
  5. **DISCUSS:** How does knowing our world is spiritually blind change how you see the lost? How do you pray for the lost?

6. **DISCUSS:** What causes spiritual blindness (**Romans 1:18–25**), and what is God’s remedy for blindness (**John 9:41; Revelation 3:17–18**)?

5. Two rulers

a. Jesus rules the kingdom of light.

- i. Jesus, the glory of heaven, came down as a light into a dark world.
  1. **John 1:14** – *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*
  2. **John 1:4–5** – *“[4] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*

a. Sadly, some did not recognize Jesus for who He truly is.

- ii. Jesus is the brilliance of heaven.

1. **Revelations 21:23** – *“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”*

- iii. Jesus will rule over the godly in the kingdom of light forever.

1. **Colossians 1:12** – *“. . . giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”*
2. **DISCUSS:** How has Jesus been your guiding light in a dark world?

b. Evil rules the kingdom of darkness.

- i. **John 3:19–20** – *“[19] This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”*

1. People do not want to be vulnerable and exposed.
2. God wants every person to step into the light and be freed from bondage.
3. **DISCUSS:** What led you to overcome the fear of exposure and step into the light?

6. Two forces

a. Truth triumphs in the kingdom of light.

- i. **John 18:36** – *“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’”*
  1. Jesus’ kingdom is greater than this world.

2. **DISCUSS:** How does knowing you belong to a kingdom beyond all the kingdoms of this world change your worldview?
- ii. **John 18:37** – *“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”*
  1. Jesus’ followers should be on the side of truth.
  2. God wants us to speak the truth in love despite cultural pressure to lie to avoid offense.
  3. **DISCUSS:** What does it mean to speak the truth in love? How are you maturing in this area?
- b. Deception dominates in the kingdom of darkness.
  - i. The dark blinds
    1. **Proverbs 4:19** – *“The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”*
    2. **1 John 1:6** – *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”*
      - a. People who claim to be Christians but do the works of the kingdom of darkness are deceived.
      - b. The kingdom of darkness is laced with deception, and we are living in age of information where people are easily deceived, and people are saying deceptive things.
  - ii. The information age
    1. Modern society is inundated with information without the discernment to filter through it to determine what is right, good, and true.
    2. Be careful who you allow to influence you.
    3. Some claim to possess “special knowledge,” which is a common gnostic philosophy dating back to the 2nd century.
    4. The Holy Spirit is necessary to avoid walking in the lies of the dark.
    5. We must seek to please the Lord over man.
    6. **DISCUSS:** How do you use discernment with what content you consume and what content you avoid? What are fruits of your choices?

## 7. Two destinations

- a. The light leads to life.
  - i. The author of life offers us the abundant life, in this life and the next.

1. **John 8:12** – *“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”*
  2. **John 10:10** – *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*
  3. **DISCUSS:** What does the abundant life look like? How is it evident in your life?
- b. The dark leads to death.
- i. **Isaiah 9:2** – *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.”*
    1. **Matthew 4:16** quotes this verse to show that this prophecy is fulfilled in Christ.
  - ii. Though this verse is good news, it shows that by nature, we walk in darkness.
  - iii. Everyone will face physical death, but not everyone will face eternal death.
    1. Satan’s ambition is to take as many people as possible to hell with himself.
    2. God’s ambition is that none should perish but all would come to repentance and choose the kingdom of light.
    3. However, where we spend eternity is our choice.

## 8. Two births

- a. We are born into the kingdom of darkness.
  - i. We would not need to be rescued if we were born into the kingdom of light.
    1. **Colossians 1:13** – *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”*
    2. **1 Peter 2:9** – *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light.”*
- b. We must be born again into the kingdom of life by faith in Christ.
  - i. Our spirit is dead until we trust in Christ’s finished work on the cross.
    1. **John 12:46** – *“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”*
    2. God’s heart is for every person to leave the kingdom of darkness and join His kingdom of light.

3. **DISCUSS:** Do you share God's heart for the lost? How can you participate in leading others to see the light?
- ii. **Acts 26:18** – Jesus sent Paul to share the Gospel with the gentiles, *“to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”*
  1. You can enter the kingdom of light by trusting in and yielding to Jesus.
  2. **DISCUSS:** Which of these two kingdoms do you belong to? Why? Does your life and your claim align?

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)