

I. Introduction

- A. North America is in a politically charged season, with a federal election campaign underway in the US, and one coming to Canada in the next year. Left-right polarization has been deepening and will likely only get worse. We've already seen an assassination attempt in the US during this campaign; during the last Canadian election campaign, some protestors got more aggressive.
- B. How are we, as Christians, to think, act, and carry ourselves? Most pastors feel pressure or temptation to make political statements, endorsements, or stands. Some do these things from the pulpit, while others refuse to, citing separation of Church and State. How is the Church supposed to interface with politics?
- C. As members of the body of Christ, we are citizens – and ambassadors – of the Kingdom of God (aka Kingdom of Heaven). What does that mean? What is the Kingdom of God, and how does that citizenship relate to, or interfere with, our citizenship as Canadians?

II. The Kingdom of God is Not of this World

- A. Jesus was not crucified for bringing a gospel of personal repentance and forgiveness of sins. Rome was polytheistic – many religions were tolerated. Why was Jesus crucified in a tolerant society? Because He was the King of another kingdom (Jn. 18:33 – 19:16).
 - 1. When Pilate got serious in his interrogation of Jesus, his central question was, “are you the King of the Jews?” (Jn. 18:33). Jesus did not deny this statement, but replied by speaking about the nature of 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.” (Jn. 18:36, ESV)

- a. Not a denial of being King over a kingdom, but a clear statement that His kingdom is different – it has different values, different principles, different objectives, and different means of pursuing those objectives.
 - 2. Pilate was initially unthreatened by Jesus and sought to release Him (Jn. 18:39; 19:4). When the Jews accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God, Pilate got nervous (19:8). He cross-examined Jesus again, trying desperately to get an answer that he could use to release Jesus (v.9-10).

“You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” (v.11a, ESV)

3. In His questioning before Pilate, Jesus made two statements about His kingdom:
 - a. **It is not cut from the same cloth as the political kingdoms of this world.**
 - b. **It is superior over the political kingdoms of this world.**

- B. The writer of Hebrews makes the same point that the Kingdom of God does not have its origins in this material world, like our kingdoms/empires/states do:

“¹⁸For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet and a voice [describing the scene at Mt. Sinai beginning in Ex. 19]...²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant...” (Heb. 12:18-19,22-24, ESV)

1. The Kingdom of God, which we have been commuted into (Col. 1:13) originates in heaven; it is spiritual, not earthly, and as such it is different from the thinking and functioning of the kingdoms of this world (i.e. Jas. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 1-2).
2. The heroes of the OT knew this to some degree. They were holding out for this kingdom, living separate and different from the world (Heb. 11:13-16, 24-27). They understood their primary citizenship to be of that heavenly kingdom, as opposed to the earthly ones they lived in.

- C. One of the most often-quoted passages about the Kingdom of God makes this same point: that the Kingdom of God is not primarily about earthly things, but eternal, spiritual things:

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17, ESV)

- D. And yet, the Kingdom of God is *for* this world. The Word makes clear that the Kingdom of God will be established *on the earth* (see Dan. 2:31-35; 7:13-14,27; Is. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:15-20; Rev. 11:15).

III. The Kingdom of God is “Now” and “Not Yet”

- A. “Inaugurated Eschatology” (eschatology = study of the last things) – the Kingdom of God was inaugurated (began) at the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He launched the Kingdom of heaven, but it hasn’t fully materialized yet. It is both “now” and “not yet.”

“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (Mt. 4:17, ESV)

“²⁰Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” (Lk. 17:20-21, ESV)

- B. In Acts 1, during the 40 days in which Jesus was speaking to them about the Kingdom of God (post-resurrection, v.3), the disciples asked Him about the material establishment of His Kingdom. His response did not deny a material kingdom on earth but directed them to advance the Kingdom in its present form.

“⁷...It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But 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, ESV)

1. This is in line with what Jesus had already taught them about His second coming and the anticipated establishment of His Kingdom:

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations [now], and then the end will come [not yet].” (Mt. 24:14, ESV)

IV. The Kingdom of God Will Remain Forever

- A. This one is self-explanatory: there are several passages that clearly speak to the everlasting nature of the Kingdom of God.

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.” (Dan. 2:44, ESV)

“And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (Dan. 7:14, ESV)

“⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” (Is. 9:6-7, ESV)

“Then 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.’” (Rev. 11:15, ESV)

- B. Connected to the idea of the permanence of the Kingdom is the idea of its strength; it will remain forever, because there is no other leader or kingdom that can threaten it.

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed...” (Dan. 2:44a, ESV)

“²⁶...‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ ²⁷The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably.” (Heb. 12:26-28, NIV)

1. Jesus pointed to this reality in His concluding remarks of the Sermon on the Mount, when He said that those who practiced what He had taught (the “constitution of the Kingdom”) would be like a man who built his house on the rock, which is a foundation that stands firm against storms (Mt. 7:24-27).

V. Summary

- A. Paul refers to us as citizens (Phil. 3:20) and ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) of Christ and His kingdom. There are three important characteristics of His kingdom to remember:
1. The Kingdom of God is not *of* this world, but it is *for* this world.
 2. The Kingdom of God is both “now” and “not yet.”
 3. The Kingdom of God will remain forever.