

# Not of this World



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In a very violent and often aggressive world today, the believer in Christ is reminded every day that His kingdom is *not of this world*. From the moment Jesus arrived, He was opposed; His plan rejected; and His kingdom never accepted by the masses. From Herod to hosts of His own people, His plan of life was flatly refused. John 1:10 *"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not."*

Jesus often used the phrase *Kingdom of God*—so we should know what being *part* of that kingdom means. Matthew 6:33 *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* This was on financial trust, but the *Kingdom of God* involves far more than just receiving material blessings through prayer and trust on God.

During the first century, Jesus' disciples were surprised that He did not speak out against the Roman government; no political statements and no demand for change of leadership. Instead of opposing the government, Jesus told us to *pay* taxes to the government, and He even healed the servant of a Roman official.

When Pilate and the Jews called for His crucifixion, John 18:36 *"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."*

Jesus preached a consistent message for over three and a half years, but His disciples—and many after them—seem to have missed it. The main theme of His message was to be part of the

*Kingdom of God*—therefore, we should want to be *part* of it, and to know the *definition* of it.

Most Christians say that Jesus came to die for our sins, and to save people from the lake of fire; or that He came to preach salvation by faith in Him—even though Jesus only spoke on that subject a few times; or some would say He came to teach about a needed new birth.

The teaching of Jesus was more about *how* to pray, and about financial *trust* on God. Jesus talked much about *eternal life* in parables—emphasizing the importance of living a life of faith and trust on Him; forgiving everyone of everything ever done to us; and about the necessity of loving others—both friends *and* enemies.

Of the many life issues Jesus spoke on, the *one* He emphasized was *The Kingdom of God*—Matthew 4:17 *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* It says Acts 8:12 *"When [the people] believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

In spite of our Savior's clear teaching on the Kingdom of God—a kingdom of non-aggression; of peace, patience, love and forgiveness toward everyone—professing Christians have spent the greater part of the last two thousand years trying to prove that teaching wrong. People have pledged allegiance to earthly kingdoms and armed forces of various countries, while claiming to follow Jesus.

It was, however, not always this way—the first century Christians understood that choosing to become part of Jesus' kingdom, meant rejecting the claims of all others—they were *not of this world*. Even though believers obey government decrees Romans 13:1 *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,"* when government laws conflict with God's Word, He must come first.

Many professed believers want to be involved in their government, but to do so conflicts in many ways with the teaching of the Bible. Origen, an early Christian writer, defended the church's stance concerning earthly governments. He said: *It is not for the purpose of escaping public duties that Christians decline public offices, but that they may reserve themselves for a diviner and more necessary service in the Church of God—for the salvation of men.*

First century believers were so zealous for the Kingdom of God, that they had no interest in giving allegiance to anything else. This was alarming to the Roman government, as it is to many governments today. When Christians would not pledge allegiance to the Emperor, they persecuted them, lashed them in public, put them in prisons, and worse.

The Christians' allegiance was to a kingdom that focused on peace; not violence, and on inner beauty rather than outward adornment. They focused on loving God and other people, not fulfilling selfish desires. The Kingdom of God is *not of this world*—it is a kingdom that cares for the poor; that forgives those who sin against them; that does not save up for the future; and chooses to live simply and humbly so they can help others in need.

The Roman government did not know what to do with Christian in the first century. Believers refused to fight and be aggressive. They did not care about worldly honors and had no desire for temporal wealth. No matter how hard Rome tried to stamp them out, they continued to increase. Rome had subdued powerful kingdoms, but did not know what to do with a kingdom of love.

These early Christians faced a foe as fierce as any radical Islamic regime—but Christianity still survived through faith in Christ—a faith that would not compromise. First century Christianity

was a powerful kingdom that turned the world upside down.

Some unbelieving Jews wanted to persecute Christians Acts 17:6 “*And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.*” It was because Acts 17:7 “*These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.*”

When Jesus was on earth, He did not focus on the brutality and unscriptural ways of the Roman government, but emphasized the *Kingdom of God* and the big *change* it can bring about in one’s life.

The kingdom Jesus proclaimed, is a society where the people truly love *one another* as they love *themselves*; where they take care of anyone who needs help; where *no one* looks down on anyone else; where all material possessions are shared or given to those who need them; and a kingdom where money is not stored for the future, but just used for the present.

The Kingdom of God is where the people *give* anything to each other, so that their *King* receives the honor, glory, and praise. In today’s world, it is difficult to imagine a kingdom where honesty prevails; where the truth is always told; and where there is no need for lawyers, an army, policemen or politicians.

Nevertheless, *this* is the kingdom Jesus wanted to set up—a *kingdom of light* in the midst of a *world of darkness*. Jesus was born into a world of broken promises; broken relationships; and broken trust. It was a self-centered world where people seemed to only be interested in what would benefit *them*—just like the world today.

Most Christian ministries today put much effort, time, and money into the publishing of tracts and religious literature—which is certainly a

good thing if the literature contains full Truth teaching—but if the church and its members actually *lived* by the teaching of Jesus, it would have *more impact* and *more effect*, than giving people something to read.

God always has a purpose behind His plans, and throughout Scripture God reveals two primary purposes in His interaction with His creation. One is to demonstrate His glory, and the other is to reconcile His creation unto Himself. The Bible says repeatedly—Exodus 14:4 Then they will “*know that I am the LORD.*” All that God did was to bring honor and glory to His Name.

Our only purpose on earth is to bring glory to God—1 Corinthians 10:31 “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” Abraham, it says, Romans 4:20 “*staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*”

God always wanted Israel to be a public demonstration of His divine power; He wanted surrounding nations to look at the nation of Israel and see what the entire world *could* be like if everyone followed Him; joined His kingdom; and refused to be part of this world.

Psalms 67:1 “*God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. 2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*” It is a prayer for God to be merciful toward Israel, and that they would show by their life of faith in Him, and their obedience to His Word, how He would bless them and prosper Israel.

It was not God’s desire to bless only this one country or nation, but His ultimate desire is to pour out His blessings on *all* nations—Israel was just being asked to provide a public *demonstration* of God’s *love* and *intention* for the entire world—if they would accept His kingdom; walk

in obedience; listen to His instruction, and continue to trust in Him for every detail of life.

*That* is what God wants to this day—His Kingdom, and the one Jesus proclaimed, was to be a present reality—it *could* and it *would* if we would read and heed *how* He told us to live; *how* we are to treat one another; and *how* we are to always forgive everyone, so *He* can forgive us. Luke 6:35 “*But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.*”

Far too many who *say* they love God, and *profess* faith in Christ, show little resemblance to the loving kingdom of trust on God, that Jesus proclaimed to the world. Such a kingdom never came to be—John 1:11 “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*”

Jesus said Luke 19:10 “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;*” and He then told a parable—11 “*because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*”

Jesus told about 12 “*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return,*” but the world today is still saying what the *people* said then—Luke 19:14 “*We will not have this man to reign over us.*”

We are *not* of *this* world, but we *should* be part of the kingdom of God. We are to act, and live, and treat everyone in a way that brings glory to God—today in the midst of a hurting world. It is an amazing opportunity for us, as believers in Christ, to corporately show that we *definitely* want Jesus to reign over us, and to save us from our sins—as we continue to believe and trust Him in faith. Not of this world—but part of God’s kingdom!



[www.fcgchurch.org](http://www.fcgchurch.org)

PO Box 24283; Philadelphia, PA 19120

[info@fcgchurch.org](mailto:info@fcgchurch.org)

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