

Join us for

# Wednesday Night Bible Study



## Berea Christian Church

Our Teacher

**Pastor Rob Stovall**

**Wednesday – April 22, 2020**

**“My Kingdom Is Not of This World”**

## What Jesus Actually Meant When He Said:

### **“My Kingdom Is Not of This World.”**

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”—Matthew 28:16–20*

Jesus taught his disciples to pray “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). This prayer asks God to act. It pleads with God to enter into our circumstances and to bring about his good rule over our lives and the lives of the people we call our enemies. It seeks the will of God. It hopes for the day when God would end war, bring good news to the poor, bind the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, bring justice to the oppressed, comfort those who mourn, create a new heavens and a new earth, and gather all the nations to worship him (Isa 2:4; 60:1–2; 66:22–23).

Jesus’ prayer guides us through a world where heaven and earth can seem really far apart. Wars are still fought. The poor still experience injustice. The broken-hearted still suffer. People are still captive to sin, death, the devil, and the abusive social structures that allow sinful hearts to exploit the weak. Communities still mourn. And the people that God has gathered to worship him are few. In all this, God can seem distant and uninvolved, but, when we pray, we remind ourselves that God is involved in the world. This prayer asks God to do what he already desires—that his glory would fill the whole world. Jesus knew that this is exactly what we need to pray.

Despite what we see, the Bible tells us the true story about what God is up to in the world. It tells us that Jesus reigns, that death is a defeated foe, that sin is being subdued, that the hearts of the broken-hearted are being bound up, that the poor are hearing the good news, that justice is coming to the oppressed, that communities who mourn are being comforted, that the new heavens and new earth are being created, that God is gathering a mass of people from every nation to worship him. Here I want to explain three truths the Bible teaches about Jesus’ current reign.

#### **1. Jesus reigns as Lord.**

In Matthew 28:18 Jesus told his disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” After having identified with the poor, the weak, and the sinners of the world, after having been humbled on the cross, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus rose from the dead, and God gave him a name over every other name—Jesus was now the exalted as Lord over all creation (Psalm 2:7–9; Psalm 110:1–2; Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:5–11).

Jesus’ authority is tied to who he is. He is one with Yahweh, Israel’s God (John 10:30). He is Immanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). He is the Son of King David, heir to the kingdom of Israel and the eternal throne that God had promised David (2 Sam. 7).

Jesus’ authority is also tied to what he has done and will do. He was born, the savior of the world in a dirty feeding trough (Luke 2:11–12,16). He was baptized for the forgiveness of sins, not for any sin of his own, but

to identify with sinners, to show solidarity with us (Matt. 3:13–17). He came to preach good news to the poor, freedom to prisoners, and healing for the sick. He came to free humanity from the prison of sin and death. He announced that God’s jubilee, the time of blessing and abundance symbolized through an Old Testament celebration, had come (Lev. 25:8–22; Luke 4:18–19). He came in the name of the Lord to deliver his people, and he did this through dying on a cross and rising from the dead for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 21:9; Colossians 1:19 – 20; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:24; Rom. 6:4). And he will return “in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).

## **2. Jesus reigns as a gracious king.**

Jesus is a gracious king. His message was an outrageous message of grace and good news. He taught that the kingdom of heaven comes like a farmer scattering seed freely in good soil, thorn bushes, and rocky ground (Matt. 13:1–9). The kingdom of heaven is like a fishing net that gathers a massive amount of fish of all kinds (Matt. 13:47–50). The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding feast in which a king invites everyone that his servants can find (Matt. 22:1–10). The kingdom of heaven is like the story of a prodigal son who squanders his wealth on reckless living and returns home to a Father who embraces him and throws a huge party (Luke 15:11–32). His preaching was about the extravagant love God had for his people, the very ones who did not deserve it.

Not only did Jesus preach an outrageous message of grace, but he also practiced what he preached. The Gospels record Jesus demonstrating the character of his reign through healing people of all kinds of diseases, even pouring out his mercy upon those outside the ethnic borders of Israel (Matt. 4:23–24; Matt. 8:5–13; Matt. 10:1, 8; Matt. 12:9–13). The climax of Jesus’ mercy happened when he gave up his life for the salvation of the world, dying the shameful death of a declared criminal upon a Roman cross.

## **3. Jesus ushers in a kingdom of peace and justice.**

John 18:33–37 tells of Jesus encounter with Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor over the Judean region. The Jewish leaders had already questioned Jesus at a trial conducted in the darkness of night, and apart from any real evidence, they found Jesus guilty of blasphemy and sentenced him to death. The problem was that the Jewish leaders were not able to execute criminals found guilty in their courts. The Romans reserved the right to execute criminals. Thus, the Jewish leaders brought Jesus before Pilate for questioning, sentencing, and executing.

When Pilate questioned Jesus, he received strange answers from this Jewish Rabbi accused of beginning a revolution and establishing himself as king of the Jews:

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 18:36–37)

Jesus’ point is often misunderstood. His kingdom is not immaterial. His kingdom is not limited to a reign in human hearts. His kingdom is not indifferent to how Christians treat their fellow human beings. His kingdom

is different from the power-grabbing, violence-driven kingdoms, and policies of this world. Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom of peace and justice that enters the world first as a mission of grace and mercy.

In Isaiah 60:1–2 and 66:22–23 God promised to usher in a kingdom of peace. This is what Jesus promised to bring (Luke 4:18–19). And this is a key to understanding Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' death was not the failure of his mission, but part of its fulfillment. Through death, Jesus suffered the judgment for sin so that he could bring the peace and justice of God's kingdom to those who would receive it.

Now, God delays judgment and the fullness of his kingdom of justice and peace to give people the opportunity to receive it. At Christ's return he will judge sin, death, the devil, and the people who choose to align themselves with evil (2 Peter 3:10–13; 2 Timothy 4:8; Rev. 21:5–8). For now, we wait and hope, knowing that God is waiting for sinners to repent and receive his forgiveness and his kingdom. As Peter said, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

