



BAND of BROTHERS – WEEK 9: Kingdoms in Conflict

FALL 2021

*So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters?  
God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish.*

– 1 Corinthians 1:20 ESV

- **God rules over all**

*...the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will... – Daniel 4:32 ESV*

*He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings... – Daniel 2:21 ESV*

*For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. – Romans 13:1 ESV*

*The LORD has made the heavens his throne; from there **he rules over everything**. – Psalm 103:19 NLT*

- But what about all the kingdoms of men?
- There are more than ever before
- Everyone wants to rule and reign
- And there are countless competing ideologies

**Nationalism** CHRISTIANISM  
 Humanism Liberalism CAPITALISM  
 Collectivism **Communism**  
 EXTREMISM  
 Progressivism SOCIALISM  
 Marxism Democratism  
 DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM  
 Conservatism Neoliberalism  
 TOTALITARIANISM Humanitarianism

- **Drowning in a sea of “isms”**

- “ism” was named the 2015 Words of the Year by Merriam-Webster

- **-ism** – (noun suffix) a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory  
adherence to a system or a class of principles

- “isms” are nothing more than **ideologies**

- Ideology

- a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture  
a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture

“An ideology is an active intellectual framework tied to particular social and political ends.” – Collin Slowey, “The Christian and Ideology”

- Five characteristics of an ideology

1. It’s **comprehensive**

- It professes to explain the **entirety** of human experience

2. It’s **goal-oriented**

- It proposes and promotes a **desired state of affairs** for all society

3. It teaches that progress requires **struggle**

- There’s only one victor in the **war of ideas**

4. It requires **commitment**

- Its proponents must constantly prove their **loyalty** to the cause

5. It’s **intellectual**

- Its leaders are typically from the well-educated and the world of academics

- Maurice Cranston, Professor of Political Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1969–85

- Ideology and idolatry

- They attempt to fill the role of God in human affairs

“I view theologies as modern types of that ancient phenomenon idolatry, complete with their own accounts of sin and redemption.” – – David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions*

“...if we find our meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in an ideology, then that ideology – and not our faith – will become the guiding force in our lives.” – – Collin Slowey, “The Christian and Ideology”

- Ideologies appeal to the **heart** and the **head**
- They influence our **emotions** and **intellect**
- They offer **physical** solutions to **spiritual** problems
- They become **replacements** for God in our lives

- They substitute **redemption** with **revolution**
- 2 Corinthians 11  
*But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, **your thoughts will be led astray** from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or if you accept **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. – vs 3-4*

- Another (*allos*) **Jesus**
  - A different form of **salvation**
  - Literally: “Jehovah is salvation”
  - Ideologies offer a different “Messiah”
  - They promote an alternative source of **deliverance**
- A different (*heteros*) **spirit**
  - A different form of **empowerment**
  - Paul uses the lower-case form of spirit (*pneuma*)
  - Literally: the rational spirit or power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides
  - Ideologies offer a different source of **power**
  - They deify human **intellect** and **ingenuity**
- A different (*heteros*) **gospel**
  - A different source of **hope**
  - **gospel** – *euangelion* – good news
  - Ideologies offer alternative “**salvation stories**”
  - They promote salvation **apart from God**

“The so-called secular ideologies ... may lack a sense of the transcendent or of spirituality in the traditional sense. Their purgatories and heavens lie on earth (the heavens being not above but in the future). But they too feed on myth and doctrine, and mobilize people’s feelings with a sense of purpose and sacrifice, commitment and identity.”

– The Gifford Lectures, “The World’s Religions and Ideologies in Interaction”

*And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on **the same terms** as we do.*  
 – vs 12

- Similar but not the same
  - Every ideology contains truth
  - Yet none of them are **the truth, the way, and the life**
  - The claim a level of **ascendency** and **exclusivity**
  - But their mission is neither **divine** nor **efficacious**
  - They’re the **plans of men** masquerading as the **will of God**

For such men are **false apostles, deceitful workmen**, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as **servants of righteousness**. – vs 12-15

- **False apostles** – ψευδαπόστολος – *pseudapostolos*
  - Literally: deceitful or lying messengers
  - One falsely claiming to bring good news
  - Any ideology that denies God is ultimately **idolatrous**
  - Any hope it offers is **deceitful** and will ultimately prove **destructive**
- **Deceitful workmen** – δόλιος ἐργάτης – *dolios ergatēs*
  - *dolios* – someone who deals deceptively with others
  - *ergatēs* – a laborer or hired hand
  - They come across as **beneficial** and **sacrificial**
  - They claim to “labor” for the **common good**
  - But their motives are ultimately **self-serving**
- **Servants of righteousness**  
Servant – διάκονος – *diakonos*  
a minister or servant

Righteousness – δικαιοσύνη – *dikaiosynē*  
integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness  
correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting

- They profess to be ministers of **justice**
- They promise a society marked by virtue, purity, and integrity
- **But apart from God!**

“...each of the ideologies is based on a specific soteriology, that is, on a worked-out theory promising deliverance to human beings from some fundamental evil that is viewed as the source of a broad range of human ills, including tyranny, oppression, anarchy, poverty, and so forth. As Goudzwaard puts it, ‘The mature ideology is a false revelation of creation, fall, and redemption.’”  
– David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions*

- **Nothing new under the sun**

- The term may be relatively new, but not the concept
- It’s as old as the fall

“...your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**” – Genesis 3:5 ESV

- Able to make your own determination of what is best

*“...your eyes will be opened [that is, you will have greater awareness], and you will be like God, knowing [the difference between] good and evil.” – Amplified Bible*

- Autonomy and Independence
- Self-determination
- The right to create your own world and destiny

*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes... – Judges 21:25 ESV*

- Ideologies in Jesus day:

**Sadducee-ism** – the liberals of their day

- Primarily from the wealthy and aristocratic class
- They were priests who made peace with secular Greek culture
- They were “literalists” who held the law in high regard

**Pharisee-ism** – the conservatives of their day

- These were the academic elites
- Comprised of scholars, lawyers, and theologians
- When it came to the law, they were contextualists
- They were strong cultural critics and strident separatists

**Herodian-ism** – the progressives of their day

- They were political activists who favored big government
- They were willing to compromise with Rome to make it happen
- Anything that threatened their agenda was to be eliminated

**Zealot-ism** – the extremists of their day

- They were anarchists who promoted the overthrow of the government
- They had a radical attachment to liberty
- They embraced violence as an acceptable strategy

**Essene-ism** – the secessionists of their day

- They were extreme separatists who distrusted big government
- They lived a communal/monastic lifestyle
- They avoided culture at all costs to maintain their purity

*“What is distinctive about these parties is not the names they bear at any particular time, but the perspectives they represent at all times as the human family responds to the issues and challenges of religious, social, and political life.” – Colin Harris, “Is Ideology the Pervasive Idolatry of Our Time?”*

- Galatians 1:6-8 NLT

*I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following **a different way that pretends to***

***be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.***

*Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.*

- **The inevitable reckoning for our failure to reconcile**

- Church membership in America
  - 1937-1998 – 70%
  - 2018 – 50%
- Religious affiliation
  - The “nones” (no religious affiliation) – is now 25%
  - 43% of Americans are **un**-churched
  - 34% of Americans are **de**-churched

“As Christianity’s hold, in particular, has weakened, ideological intensity and fragmentation have risen. American faith, it turns out, is as fervent as ever; it’s just that what was once *religious* belief has now been channeled into *political* belief. Political debates over what America is supposed to mean have taken on the character of theological disputations. This is what religion without religion looks like.”  
– Shadi Hamid, “America Without God,” *The Atlantic*

“The challenge with competing worldviews is that there are fragments of similarities to some Christian teachings, and some may recognize and latch on to these ideas, not realizing they are distortions of biblical truths. The call for the Church, and its teachers and thinkers, is to help Christians dissect popular beliefs before allowing them to settle in their own ideology.”  
– Barna Group, “Competing Worldviews Influencing Today’s Christians”

- The Book of Jude  
*But **these people** scoff at things they do not understand. Like unthinking animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and so they bring about their own destruction.* – vs 10
  - “These people” – false teachers
    - Church-attenders but “ungodly people” – vs 4
    - Who twist the grace of God – vs 4
    - Propagate unbiblical ideas – vs 4
    - And promote a different kind of salvation – vs 4

*What sorrow awaits them! For **they follow** in the footsteps of Cain, who killed his brother. Like Balaam, they deceive people for money. And like Korah, they perish in their rebellion.* – vs 11

- “These people...”
  - ...are driven by a warped sense of **right and wrong**
  - ...are motivated by **justification** disguised as **justice**
  - ...promote **rebellion** in the guise of **reformation**

*...they are like **dangerous reefs** that can shipwreck you. They are like **shameless shepherds** who care only for themselves. They are like **clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain**. They are like **trees** in autumn that are **doubly dead**, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots. They are like **wild waves** of the sea, churning up the foam of their shameful deeds. They are like **wandering stars**, doomed forever to blackest darkness. – vs 12-13*

- Ideologies without God are like...
  - ...**hidden reefs** – dangerous and deadly
  - ...**selfish shepherds** – who care only for themselves
  - ...**clouds without rain** – promising but, ultimately, disappointing
  - ...**dead, fruitless trees** – incapable of providing sustenance
  - ...**wild waves** – “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”
  - ...**wandering stars** – a lousy source of direction
- A call to remain faithful

*But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God’s Spirit in them.*

*But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God’s love. – vs17-21*

## **Next Week: The Kingdom and Culture**

### **For Further Discussion**

- Why are Christians just as prone to allow an ideology to become idolatry in their lives? Share personal examples.
- When we hear the term “false teacher,” we think of someone teaching heresy, but how could secular ideologies apply?
- In what ways do today’s ideologies act as substitutes for the Gospel and why do we fail to recognize it?







WEEK 10 HOMEWORK: The Kingdom and Culture

FALL 2021

According to last week's lesson, we need to be wary of all the competing ideologies that are in the culture today. With that in mind, in this lesson we hope to better understand the relationship between the Church and culture in this present age. We've already covered the two dangers of isolation and assimilation. We can't hide from the world, but we're not to blend in either. So, how are we to influence the culture in which we live as aliens and strangers? As Christians, are we responsible for redeeming the culture? Can we somehow transform society and bring God's kingdom to earth?

- Read John 17:9-11, 14-19. This is what is commonly referred to as Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. As you read these verses consider what Jesus is asking the Father to do for those He was about to leave behind (and that includes us). Write down your first impressions.

According to Jesus' words, what should our relationship with the world look like?

How is a believer to live *in the world but not of it*?

- Read 1 Peter 2:11-16. What do you think it would look like if we lived with the attitude that we are "sojourners and exiles" on this earth?

What are some tangible ways that can we keep our “conduct among the Gentiles honorable?”

How do we remain “subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” without comprising our faith?

Look closely at verse 17. How in the world are we supposed to honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the emperor? And why do you think Peter puts these four things in the same sentence?

- Read Romans 13:1-7. In what ways could a less-than-godly governmental authority be “instituted by God” and why would Paul tell us to be subject to it?

Paul suggests that if you resist a governmental authority, you are resisting God. How does this impact you?

- Read Acts 4:13-20. Peter and John have been dragged before the High Council of the Jews for preaching the gospel. Acts 5:27-29 provides another occasion where the disciples faced a similar situation. How do Peter’s responses help answer the question above?
- Read Acts 17:16-34. Based on this story, in what ways does Paul operate “in the world” while refusing to “be of the world?” What would this look like for you today?