

Skyland Conference 1988 (Two Kingdoms) - Part 1

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the contrast between the world and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, highlighting the devices of the devil that seek to blur this distinction.

Duration: 40:10

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 12:31, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:9, 1 John 5:19

Topics: "Kingdom Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the emptiness of the world and how it fails to satisfy the human heart. He references a story about a young entertainer who had achieved fame and success but still felt empty inside. The preacher emphasizes that the world portrayed in media and entertainment is not the reality and urges young people to see beyond its allure. He also highlights biblical passages that speak about the ruler of this world being judged and the need to be aware of the devil's devices.

Transcript

Well, it really is a joy and a privilege to be here, meet some people whom I met previously, sometime after the Second World War. I didn't say how long after the Second World War, but it really is good to be here. You know, years ago I was invited to the Blue Ridge Conference and I accepted, but before I ever got there it was canceled.

And this year I was invited to this conference and I accepted. It was reduced from two to one. I wonder if the Lord tried to say something to Dick Andrews.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Would you turn in your Bible please to Colossians chapter 1 and just read one or two verses there. Colossians chapter 1, verse 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 this will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, for all patience and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

And here's the golden text. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, to whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. In our studies together we want to be taking up the story of two kingdoms.

The story of two kingdoms. And you have those two kingdoms in the verse that we read. The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

We call it the world and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to think about these two kingdoms together, and I'd like to contrast them. Not compare them, but contrast them, because the only way in which they can be compared is if they're both kingdoms.

That's the only comparison. Otherwise, it's strictly a matter of contrast. When you think of the world in the sense that it's used in the Bible, what do you think of? Well, certainly it's not the world of creation, is it? It's really a marvel of creation that God has made, and the creation is not evil.

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament show us his handiwork. So when we think of the world, we're not speaking of the world of God's handiwork at all. That causes us to worship him.

And we're certainly not thinking of unsaved men, because God loved the world and gave his only begotten Son to whom whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God loves mankind. When we speak of the world, we're speaking of the society that man has built up to make himself happy without God.

It's human civilization with its base motive, its base desires, and its egotism. When I think of the world, I think of any sphere where the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not welcomed. That's the world.

Any sphere where the name of the Lord Jesus is not welcomed. I've often said that if you want to see the world in color, all you have to do is turn on the television. That's the world.

What you see on television is the world. But what does the world have? Violence, sex, filth, corruption, profanity, but nothing about the living, loving Savior. That's TV.

I used to say that, but you know, this last week has come to me. If you really want to see the world and what the world is like, go to Calvary. Go, first of all, to the wretched trial that preceded Calvary.

The justice of the world. Isn't that justice? The way the world treated God incarnate, and I think we want to remember, if we never remember anything else from tonight's theater, the hands of the world are stained with the blood of Jesus Christ. And to love the world is to hate God.

It really is. To love the world is to hate God. Because the hands of the world are stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Worldliness is essentially the love of passing things. And to me, this is one of the tragedies of living. To see people, and they're spending their lives for things that are of no eternal consequence.

That worldliness, the love of passing, that the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. And the will of God is that there should be a tremendous contrast between the world, and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the church. But you know, sad to say today, that difference is blurred.

You look at a lot of Christian TV programs, I tell you it looks an awful lot like the world, doesn't it? I don't see much difference between some of the women that you might see on TV, and some of the Hollywood harlots who parade across the screen. The distinction between the world and the church has been blurred. Somebody said, I looked for the church, and found it in the world.

I looked for the world, and found it in the church. What a condemnation, huh? I looked for the church, and found it in the world. I looked for the world, and found it in the church.

But I'd like to say tonight, the world is empty. The world is false. The world is a facade, that's what it is.

It's nothing to us. It makes me think of years ago, I was out at a Bible school in Southern California, and right across the street from the Bible school was a movie lot. MGM, I think it was.

And I looked through the fence of this movie lot, and there was a western village there. There was the bar room, and there was the shop, and all these other things along the street. But you know, I walked down the street a little, and there was nothing but the front of the building there.

There was no building. It was just the front. That's the world.

It's all front. And you know that's true. The world is a fantasy.

If you want reality, you've got to come to the Lord Jesus, and to the Word of God, and to the Kingdom of God's dear Son. What is worldliness? What is worldly today? When I was growing up, and I wanted to do things, my mother would tell me, look, that's worldly. And I suppose it formed an impression in my mind.

And some of the ideas that were then cited as worldly, well, they're kind of ridiculed today. Like, people used to say, well, card playing is worldly. Dancing is worldly.

Smoking, drinking. Those things are worldly. Today, they ridicule that.

Because that's not what's worldly. It's the thoughts, and the intents, and the attitudes that we are. That's what's worldly.

They ridicule the other ones. They say, I don't drink, and I don't chew, and I don't go with girls and dudes, and stuff like that. I want to tell you, they're all worldly.

They're all worldly. It isn't a matter of choosing some and rejecting the other. They're all worldly.

As worldly as can be. But you know, this is hard for young people. I'm so sympathetic to young people, because the world looks so attractive to them, doesn't it? The world of Marlborough country, where everyone has a convertible and leans against the front fender, you know.

And everybody's good looking. It's a fact that the world is attractive, and has tremendous appeal for young people. It's so hard to tell them it isn't the world of reality.

The world that you see on television doesn't exist. It's not the way life is, at all. It's so easy for young people to think of some older Christians who are not with it, at all.

But I want to tell you, those older Christians can see more on their knees than the world can see on its tiptoes. So often, you read in the magazines or in the newspaper, somebody who has reached the apex of the world. There's a young entertainer.

And I guess one of the top things in the world is to be invited to the White House to perform there. And he's had all of that. And then, one day, he's sitting with a friend there in his living room.

And he reaches down beyond the cushion on the sofa. And he picks up a gun. And he says, is that all there is? He puts it to his head and ends it all.

That's the world. I mean, these are people who have reached the very top as far as the world is concerned. And then they say, is this all there is? And they end it all.

Pathetic, isn't it? But the world is empty, as I hope to show as we go along. It's wonderful, isn't it, that a whole book in the Bible is written about this. By the richest and wisest man who ever lived, Solomon.

The book of Ecclesiastes. And the purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes is to show that all the world is not sufficient to fill the human heart. But it's true, isn't it? All the world is not sufficient to fill the human heart.

He tries education. He tries pleasure. He tries sex.

He tries materialism. What shall he do that cometh after the king? You know, if Solomon, with all his money and all his riches, couldn't find satisfaction in the world, what chance do you and I have? And what did he say? He said, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. He said, just like chasing wind.

That's true. You know, life under the sun. Remember, that expression, under the sun, is found 29 times in the book of Ecclesiastes.

It's the key to the book. If you miss that, you miss the whole thing. Under the sun, found 29 times in the book of Ecclesiastes.

And what Solomon is saying, look, if you never can get above the sun, life isn't worth living. That's true. But when you do get above the sun, to the Lord Jesus Christ, you find life that is life indeed.

I think it's interesting that the book of Ecclesiastes is followed by the Song of Solomon. Ecclesiastes says that the whole world isn't big enough to fill the human heart. The Song of Solomon says the human heart isn't big enough to contain the love of our eternal lover.

Jesus, I'm sick of love. Don't give me any more! I'll burst! It's really what he's saying. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pascal was right when he said that the God shapes vacuum in the human heart. God has constructed the human heart in such a way that nothing and no one but the Lord Jesus Christ is ever able to fill it. So we want to think about the world, and we want to think about the other kingdoms as well.

The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not the same as the church, I know, but for all practical purposes in this study, we're going to think of them this way. Okay, the ruler of the world, and the ruler of the other kingdoms.

The ruler of the world, Satan. We want to think about him for a while. And look up some of these verses, because he's called the ruler of the world.

John chapter 12 and verse 31. John 12, 31. Now is the judgment of this world.

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. There's a very real sense in which Satan is the ruler of the world at the present time. His doom is sealed, and he knows that.

And I think as we approach the end of the age, he's becoming more and more desperate. But in the meantime, he is indeed the ruler of the world, soon to be cast out. John 14, 30.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me. I think that's beautiful. Satan, coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he couldn't find anything in the Lord Jesus to respond to his evil solicitation.

Isn't that wonderful? Don't tell me Jesus could have been. He could be tempted. He could be tempted from without.

There's a difference between the Lord Jesus and you and me. The Lord Jesus could be tempted from without, but he couldn't be tempted from within. I can be tempted most.

That's what sets him apart from me. And that's what the Lord is saying here in this verse. The ruler of this world is coming, and he finds nothing in me.

There was nothing in Jesus to respond to the evil temptation of the devil. John chapter 16, verse 11. I'll go back to verse 8. When he, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit is come, he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Of sin, because they do not believe in me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and you see me no more. Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

That's an interesting passage of Scripture. Just let me pause over it for a moment. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today convicts the world of sin.

When we use this verse, we think of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of an unbeliever, don't we? We say he comes and convicts us of sin, and then we repent and we're saved. Well, that's true. But that's not exactly what the verse is saying.

The verse is saying that the very presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today condemns the world. Why? Because he shouldn't be here. Why? Because the Lord should be here on the throne.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today is a witness to a rejected Savior. It's after he went back to heaven that it was glorified that the Holy Spirit was given. And in that sense, he condemns the world because of sin.

Of righteousness, because I go to the Father and you see me no more. It was a righteous act of God to raise the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and take him home to heaven. Do you know what it proves? It proves Christ was right and the world was wrong.

That's what it proves. Righteousness. The Lord Jesus was right, and God showed his righteousness in bringing him back to heaven.

Of judgment, because the prince of this world, the very presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today pronounces the doom of the ruler of this world. The ruler of this world is judged, the scripture says. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4. I'll go back to verse 3. But even if

our gospel is veiled, it veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds, get this, whose minds the God of this age, here he is, the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

And then finally in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 19. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 19. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

There it is. The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. Now, in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11 we read that we are not ignorant of the devices of the devil.

And I think it will be profitable for us just to think for a little tonight, before we go any further, about the devices of the devil. The many ways in which he acts in the world. The Bible says we're not ignorant of his devices, but it's easy to be ignorant of his devices.

First, one of his first devices is deceit. Deceit. John chapter 8 verse 49.

Do you know what that says? It says he's a father of lies. He's been a liar from the beginning. And he is way back in the garden of Eden.

He began his lying career on earth, and he's been at it ever since. One of his devices is deceit. And he's still at it, even in the pulpit of our land.

Slander. Slander. Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10.

It says he's the accuser of the brethren. It says more than that. It says he stands before God day and night, accusing the brethren.

That's a wonderful thing, isn't it? To think that I have an advocate in heaven who's there for me day and night, while Satan is there accusing me. He never slumbers or sleeps, but he shows the nail prints in his hand as a satisfaction for those sins of which Satan is accusing me. Another device of the devil is imitation.

And you see this in the world about us today. Imitation. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 8. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 8. Imitation.

Satan has a counterfeit for everything that serves God. He has a counterfeit trinity. He has a counterfeit gospel.

He's very, very successful. Did you know that Satan is never more satanic than when he has a Bible in his hand? That's true. He's never more satanic than when he has a Bible in his hand, when he comes knocking at your door.

Purveying some false cult. Casting doubts on the word of God and imitating what is of God. You had it back in the time of Moses, didn't you? When Jannes and Jambres imitated the miracles of Moses.

And you know, I believe that as we approach to the end of the age, that we've got to be awfully careful about it. Tremendous emphasis on miracles today, isn't it? Signs and wonders. A lot of people, even in the assemblies, are being infatuated with this whole signs and wonders movement.

Makes me wonder. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, Jesus says. For there shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophets, and what beteth the resurrection of Christ? If they won't believe that, they won't believe it.

Jesus himself said that. But, Satan is a great imitator. Don't be deceived by him.

Discouragement! Discouragement! 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 7-11. 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 7-11. This had to do with the restoration of a man who had been put out of fellowship in the assembly in Corinth.

And Paul is saying, look, receive him back. Let Satan get an advantage over him, and he becomes discouraged. I wonder if some have come to the conference, and that's where you are.

You're discouraged. Easy. Easy to be discouraged.

Plenty of things to make you discouraged nowadays. Something that has helped me. I have to fight it.

Something that's helped me is something that Dwight L. Moody said. He said, I've never known God to use a discouraged person. Wow! That wakes me up.

I do want the Lord to use me. And so I fight discouragement as one of the devices of the devil. Another device of the devil is division.

Sowing division among the people of God. Now, here's the strange thing. I have no verse of Scripture for this.

I have no verse of Scripture that says, that links Satan with division. Now, some person is going to come up to me after the meeting, no doubt, with that verse. But I've been to a lot of other meetings.

I mean, people come to me with verses about division. And they come to me with verses about Satan. Nobody has come to me yet with a verse that says that Satan causes division.

And I believe he does, don't you? He certainly doesn't produce unity. That would be tearing down his own kingdom, wouldn't it? And then persecution. This is one of the devices of the devil.

Persecution. 1 Peter 5.8. Your adversary was a roaring lion. Goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

That was in the context of persecution. I've heard it said that there probably have been more martyrs of the Christian faith in our time than in any of the previous times in the history of the Christian church. He's not sleeping.

He's at it all the time. And then destruction. Another device of the devil.

Destruction. John 10. Verse 10.

Remember the Lord Jesus said, The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I believe that in our day today, especially because of the drug culture and all the rest, that we are seeing an increase in demonism in the world.

I think it accounts for a lot of the mindless crimes that you read about in the papers and the magazines. People being killed with no motive for the killing. It's just a mindless killing.

What is it? The activity of demons. Destruction. There is no exception to this rule.

The purpose of the demons is always to destroy. Always to destroy. Either to destroy the person or to destroy some other person.

The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have it. Life that they might have it more abundantly.

Another device of the devil is incomplete commitment. We see it in Peter in Matthew 8. Verses 31 through 33. And I think we also see it in Ananias and Sapphira, don't we? Where they profess to give everything but held that apart.

If Satan can't prevent us from making total commitment to the Lord, he'll try to get us to make an incomplete commitment. But in one of the versions of the Bible, it says in the psalm, God hates the man who is half and half. He's not talking a dairy product either.

God hates the man who is half and half. God wants people who are all of him. If he's not worth everything, he's not worth anything.

Isn't that true? So E.T. said, he said, If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him. Do you know that sentence changed the whole direction of my life? I read that when I was out in the Navy in the Second World War. And I got down on my knees that night and I did something I had never done before.

I turned my life over to the Lord for service. Just in the face of that single sentence, If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him. It blew me.

I couldn't answer the logic of it. I would like to have. I would like to have found an escape route, but I couldn't.

It was so true. And I bowed to the truth. And then another device of the devil is procrastination.

You see that in Felix in Acts chapter 24 and verse 25. You know, go your way, some more conveniences and I'll call on you. And you know, you think of how that's been repeated in gospel meetings down through the years.

Not only in gospel meetings, but in personal encounters with people over their souls. Yes, I plan to do it someday, but not now. Who's sitting on a person's shoulder when he says that? The devil? Sure.

Almost persuaded now to believe. Almost persuaded Christ to receive. Seems now some soul to say, Go spirit, go thy way.

Some more convenience day. Indeed, I'll call. Pride is one of the devices of the devil, isn't it? Pride.

We read that in 1 Timothy chapter 3, where it speaks about the qualifications of elders. And it said, he must not be a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Pride is a pair of sin, isn't it? First sin took place in heaven, not on earth.

The place of Satan. Aspiring to be God. Take the place of God, to get God off the throne.

And he's been doing that through his underlings ever since. Moral failure. How sad that we have to talk about this.

1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 5. Where we read that Satan tempts because of man's lack of self-control. 1 Corinthians 7, 5. What a year this has been for the evangelical church. What shame has been brought on the lovely name of Jesus.

So that now when you even speak to somebody, some stranger about the Lord, wouldn't they say, what about Jimmy Swaggerton? What about Jimmy Baker? And this is what they throw in your face. What is it? The devil. It's the devil getting in.

And I don't know how you feel about it, but I believe that a lot of it goes back to the subject of Christ and to the lust for publicity. I believe that publicity is generally bad in the face of God. I love it to read in the Gospels about my Savior and how he never craved publicity.

In fact, he would perform a miracle and what would he say? Tell no man. Tell no man. Tell.

Why did he say that? He knew the people and he knew that they wanted a Messiah to deliver them from the oppression of Rome. And he knew how fickle they were. One day they would lionize him and the next day they would donkey-ize him.

That's the world. One day they would cry Hosanna and the next day they would cry crucify him. He knew the people.

You know, one of the first rules of evangelicalism today is try to get on a talk show on television, isn't it? Men get on a talk show with some man who's an enemy of the Gospel and he makes a monkey out of them and a sham out of the Gospel. They crave that type of publicity. God won't tolerate it.

God is against it. God is not going to share his glory with somebody else. He's not going to do it.

And I believe that this lust for publicity is one of the causes for so much of the damage that has been done. You know, the best work for God is the work that goes on behind the scenes. I think I could prove that to you over and over again.

The best work that goes on isn't the work that's publicized, isn't the work that you're hearing about all the time. It's the work that's done quietly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, you could say a lot about moral failure.

We don't say it in any pride either because we know ourselves. We know how prone we are to fall. And I really believe this, that in the day in which we live we should be praying for one another more.

I really do. We should really be praying for one another. I remember years ago when a dear young missionary had to come back from the mission field.

And one of my colleagues said to me, shamefacedly, he said, you know, I never prayed for him. I never felt he needed it. He seemed so strong.

It would never happen to him. Listen, we're all made of the same stuff, aren't we? And we all need prayer. We need the prayers of God's people.

Somebody said, I measure my effectiveness by the number of people I pray for and the number of people who pray for me. That's good, isn't it? I measure my effectiveness by the number of people I pray for and the number of people who pray for me. False doctrine.

Listen, if the devil can't trip you up in the moral area, he'll try to do it in the doctrinal area. I believe those are the two areas where he's been most successful. Sex and doctrine really do.

And it's absolutely incredible, absolutely incredible how men have gone on faithfully for the Lord down through the years and then they drift off into some weird doctrine, some weird, sad, or fancy. I could give you many illustrations of it. False doctrine.

Genesis chapter 3, verse 5. You shall be as God. That's what the devil says. You shall be as God.

And you know, I don't know if any of you have read the books of David Hunt. The Seduction of Christianity, Beyond Seduction, America the Sorcerer's Apprentice. And in these books he shows you how that very thing is becoming popularized even in some evangelical circles today.

The God principle in you that he's to be awakened. You shall be as God. Incredible going on today.

The whole drift today is humanism, isn't it? The sufficiency of man in himself rather than his insufficiency and the sufficiency of God. Physical affliction. Physical affliction.

I don't know if you'll agree with me, but I believe that no sickness, suffering, tragedy comes from God. God allows them, but they don't come from him. He could not originate anything like that.

2 Corinthians 12, 7 E. Paul speaks of the thorn in the flesh. It was physical. What did he call it? The messenger of Satan to Buffet.

What's this? The messenger of Satan to Buffet. God allowed it, and that's what I see. These are the principles I see in the world today how God allows Satan to have a certain amount of leash to do certain things.

Then God says, okay, I'm going to have the last word. I will overrule this for the person's good, for my glory, and for the blessing of others. This is what's going on in the world today.

Don't tell me that sickness and sorrow and tragedy and death come from God. They don't. Now, I should just add quickly there that sometimes in the Bible, God is said to do what he only permits to be done.

Job said, the Lord has given, as the Lord has taken away, let it be the name of the Lord. Did the Lord take away? No, the Lord didn't take away. Satan took away, didn't he? But God permitted it, and in the Bible, God is often said to do what he only permits to be done.

We do that all the time, agency, the principle of agency. But many, many cases in the Bible you'll find that physical affliction are caused by Satan, but God has the last word, and God brings good out of it, blessing, glory to himself. I'll never forget a dear mother in Illinois years ago, and she had a child who was born impaired, seriously impaired.

And when the child was ten years of age, she said to me, Phil, if I could live these ten years over, I'd love them just the way the Lord has planned them. That's it. She was glorifying God in it, and she didn't blame God for it.

Matthew 13, 19, the wicked one comes and snatches away the seed. And isn't he an expert at that? The wicked one comes and snatches away the seed. And then finally, and with this we'll close, trial, 15.

Jesus said to Peter, Satan has desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat. Luke 22, 31, Luke 22, 31, Satan has desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

So it's good for us to know the ruler of this world, to know about him, to know what his devices are, and then we'll move on to a happier theme, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he offers to those who enter into his kingdom. Shall we look to the Lord in prayer? Father, we can really say with the poet, the world is too much with us. Giving and spending, we lay waste our powers.

We think of the tremendous grip that the world system has upon men and women today. We think of the majority of mankind living for the passing things of time, caring more for the body than for the soul, living for time instead of eternity. Father, as we go through these studies, we pray that the false system of the world might be thoroughly exposed, that we might thoroughly hate it because of the way it has treated our Savior.

We ask in his word, he names Jesus.

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