



## Kingdom Authority: *Government Sphere (Week 5)*

Aloha everyone and welcome back to our series, *Kingdom Authority*. Throughout this introductory series, we've been unpacking our theme for 2022 – Kingdom Authority, and giving you a roadmap for everything we will cover this year.

As a quick recap, in Week 1 of our series, Pastor Theresa had us wrestle with our own perception of authority and reimagine what authority could look like from a Biblical Perspective. Remember, we said Kingdom Authority is, **The freedom to decide and the right to act without hindrance within a given sphere to bring about Shalom (Peace).**

In Week 2 we introduced you to the different spheres of authority and covered our Church outcomes for the year. You should be fairly familiar with them by now. In 2022, what's our goal? *"Give God Control, Own My Role, Make Life Whole"*. In Hawaii Pidgin, *"Make God Large and in Charge, Take Charge, For Come Real Good Inside."* Speaking of Hawaii Pidgin,

In Week 3 Pastor Earl Introduced us to the **Individual Sphere** and how to take personal authority over our own lives. He showed us that our primary role as individuals is to **Present** God to the world as Christ's Ambassadors or in Hawaii Pidgin, Agents of Aloha.

In Week 4 we were introduced to the **Church Sphere** and our authority to **Proclaim** the Good News of Jesus Christ. Pastor Mike showed us how the early Israelites failed to Proclaim God to the nations because they were too afraid to encounter Him on His Mountain. In order for the Church to fulfill its role, we must encounter God's empowering Presence.

Then, last week, Pastor Glenn introduced us to the **Family Sphere** where he urged us to invite Jesus to dinner so that we can experience shalom in the home.

This week we're talking about taking extreme ownership over the **Government Sphere**. How should Christians engage politics and government? Should Christians engage politics and government? What about separation of Church and State?

***OG Discussion Question: How should Christians engage politics? Should political things be talked about in Church? Why or why not?***

First of all, it is important to remember that when it comes to these different spheres of authority, God is sovereign over them all. In Matthew 28:18, when Jesus said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me,"* He wasn't just referring to the individual heart or the Church – He meant everything in heaven and on earth.



As theologian and former Prime Minister in the Netherlands Abraham Kuyper put it, *"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"* All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus including earthly governments.

*"For in Him was created the universe of things, both in the heavenly realm and on the earth, all that is seen and all that is unseen. Every seat of power, realm of government, principality, and authority—it all exists through Him and for His purpose! He existed before anything was made, and now everything finds completion in Him," (Colossians 1:16).*

Jesus has laid claim to every inch of creation and as Christians we have been mandated to bring the whole of creation (including government) under the influence of His Kingdom. "But Pastor Mark," you say, "what about separation of Church and State?"

**OG Discussion Question: What does "Separation of Church and State" mean to you?**

### Separation of Church and State

While the phrase "Separation of Church and State" is one we're all familiar with, how many of us know where it originated and why? Would it surprise you to know that it doesn't come from the US Constitution? It shouldn't surprise us, considering the Founding Fathers viewed Judeo-Christian principles as indispensable to the moral foundation of America. So where did the phrase, "Separation of Church and State" originate? It came from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. In the letter, Thomas Jefferson reassured the Church that the constitution protected their religious freedoms from Government control and interference, *"...building a wall of separation between Church and State."*

Remember, God has given the **Church Sphere** and **Government Sphere** unique roles to play. It is the Church's role to **Proclaim** and it is the Government's role to **Protect**. It is not the job of the Government to establish a State Church or administer holy sacraments.

The Constitution expresses this in the First Amendment. *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."* In other words, the Federal Government cannot establish a National Religion – That is not within their sphere of authority. And Americans should be free to pursue the religion of their choosing without government interference. So the phrase, "Separation of Church and State" was meant to protect the Church from Government interference, not the other way around.

Today, this phrase has been hijacked and reinterpreted to promote exclusion and intolerance toward people of faith from participating in the public arena. Beginning with Justice Black in 1947, these words from Thomas Jefferson have been twisted to justify the systematic removal of, not just the Church, but God from all public discourse. Instead of "Freedom of Religion" they want "Freedom from Religion". Prayer banned from schools, anything with Christian language seen as taboo or prohibited from the workplace, even the Pledge of Allegiance is disappearing from schools around the Nation.



This reinterpretation of “Separation of Church and State” communicates the complete opposite of what Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers intended. George Washington said in his farewell address in 1776, *“Religion and morality are indispensable supports of our political prosperity.”* So what happens when a society rejects God? Who, or what, fills that vacuum of authority?

### **Rejecting God’s Rule**

We read about this in 1 Samuel 8. The Israelites have entered the Promise Land and God has been speaking to them through the prophet Samuel. At this point, the nation of Israel is one people. More than just a people, they are a family – the children of Abraham. God promised Abraham that his family would be blessed to be a blessing.

*“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” (Genesis 12:2-3).*

Did you know God says the same thing about you?

*“And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you,” (Galatians 3:29).*

God’s promise to Abraham belongs to us. We have been blessed to be a blessing. God says, “If you follow my commands and walk in My decrees I will bless you and the world through you.” In other words, “Give God control, own your role, make life whole.” This was God’s intention. But in 1 Samuel 8, we witness a catastrophic shift take place.

*<sup>4-5</sup> “Fed up, all the elders of Israel got together and confronted Samuel at Ramah. They presented their case: “Look, you’re an old man, and your sons aren’t following in your footsteps. Here’s what we want you to do: Appoint a king to rule us, just like everybody else.”*

What were the elders of Israel saying? “We don’t want to give God control, we don’t want to own our role, we want to be just like everybody else.” How many of us know, we can be like God and bless everybody else or we can be like everybody else and bless nobody. They wanted to be like everybody else.

*<sup>6</sup> “When Samuel heard their demand—“Give us a king to rule us!”—he was crushed. How awful! Samuel prayed to God.*

*<sup>7-9</sup> God answered Samuel, “Go ahead and do what they’re asking. They are not rejecting you. They’ve rejected Me as their King. From the day I brought them out of Egypt until this very day they’ve been behaving like this, leaving Me for other gods. And now they’re doing it to you. So let them have their own way. But warn them of what they’re in for. Tell them the way kings operate, just what they’re likely to get from a king.”*



It's happening again! Remember what Pastor Mike talked about two weeks ago? Adam and Eve were tested. God told them, "Choose Me (The tree of life) or choose yourselves (The tree of good and evil). But if you eat the forbidden fruit you will certainly die! Not because I'm going to kill you but because it will kill you." Did you know that God's wrath rarely looks like thunder and lightning bolts? Do you know what it most often looks like? Letting you have your own way. The Israelites are in for a world of hurt, not because God is going to pour out His wrath, but because He's going to let them have their own way. Church, our country is in a world of hurt right now. But it isn't because God is pouring out His wrath on us. It is because we wanted to be like everybody else and we have rejected God as our King. Crime is on the rise, suicide is on the rise, depression, families are falling apart, and we have no one to blame but ourselves. God isn't doing this to us. We're doing it to ourselves. God told Samuel, "They've rejected Me as their King, let them have their own way."

***OG Discussion Question: Do you believe our Nation is becoming more Godly or secular? How do you think this has impacted our Nation?***

*<sup>10</sup> "Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. <sup>15</sup> He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. <sup>16</sup> Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. <sup>17</sup> He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. <sup>18</sup> When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."*

God is a God who gives. But He's telling His people that an earthly king will take. God intended to fight their battles – to be their deliverer. If they reject Him, they will have to fight their own battles, many of their own making. Their sons and daughters would be taken from them. Earthly kings send others to die for them. God is the only King who sent His only Son to die for us.

God is a God who provides. There is no end to His resources. He warns them that an earthly king will take what they have earned, and not just what is required but extra for his officials, and attendants, and interest groups. We are all too familiar with how greed corrupts leaders. God is impartial. He favors all peoples equally and has given everyone unalienable rights. Earthly kings show favoritism and prefer certain groups above others based on what they can do for them. God is a God who empowers His people. Earthly kings take power from their people. God's laws are perfect and just. Man's laws are imperfect at best. When we remove God from society, what takes His place is imperfect, corruptible, man.



*19 "But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. 20 Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles," (1 Samuel 8:4-20).*

Despite God's warnings, the people insisted on a king. One of our outcomes for 2022 is, "Give God Control." How many of us know, it's hard to give God control? Why? Because it requires faith. We prefer a king we can see. How many of us know it's hard to own our role? Why? Because it's so much easier to let someone else do it. We want a king who will fight our battles for us, teach our children for us, and tell us how to think and live. Listen Church, it can feel overwhelming to wear the crown of authority God gives you. Like Pastor Glenn shared last weekend, he was terrified of the weight of being a father of five! Each of us bears the weight of tremendous authority. Our crowns can feel so heavy at times and it can be so tempting to want to surrender our crowns. That's what the Israelites did. "We don't want to be your special people anymore. We want to be like everybody else." God let them have their way. While they enjoyed the rule of a few righteous kings, the majority of their rulers were just as God warned. Over time, the family of Israel was divided, they turned from worshipping God to worshipping idols, and were eventually led into captivity until, from captivity, they cried out to God to be their King once more.

Church, here's what we can learn from the Israelites, because like we said, it can feel heavy to carry the authority God gives us, but here it is – the weight of you wearing your crown is nothing compared to the crushing weight of letting someone else wear it. Walking in your authority is difficult because the rewards aren't immediate. It will feel like a thankless job Mom and Dad. Bosses, you may not see the immediate rewards of walking in integrity and standing for righteousness in your business. But a life of consistency will bear great rewards down the line. On the flip side, not walking in your authority may bring immediate gratification. It may seem easier to let someone else take authority over your kids or to go along with where the rest of society is going. But a life of constantly surrendering your crown will bear tremendous consequences later in life. We need to own our role and take extreme ownership. As we close, I want to get real practical. How should Christians engage politics and government?

***OG Discussion Question: In what ways do you find it hard to walk in your authority?***

#### 1. Give God Control

Don't place your hope in earthly rulers. God alone is a perfect King. Have you seen those videos of people having meltdowns after the election results? That's the reaction of someone who has pinned their hopes on a human leader. If you abdicate all of your authority to an earthly ruler, then naturally you will be devastated when things don't go the way you hoped. If you acknowledge that God is in control, then you can maintain your shalom regardless of the results. Can I get in your business a little bit? Who or what determines the way that you vote? Is it culture? Is it pressure? Family? Tradition? As Christians we should exercise our right to vote for the candidates who best demonstrate Christian principles and values and uphold Godly truth. If you want to learn more about that, our Hot Topics class in the Transformation Academy just started and it's not too late to jump in. We need to give God control.



## 2. Own Your Role

We need to understand what each sphere of authority has been authorized to do. Unlike the Israelites, we cannot abdicate our authority to any earthly ruler. The Government's role is to Protect. Don't look to politicians or government officials to be the agents of change for cultural morality and Godly values. That's not a slight against politicians, but Jesus wasn't speaking to the Government when He said to be the salt and light of the earth, He was talking to us. If society doesn't reflect the Kingdom, it isn't the Government's fault, it's because we've lost our flavor and have hidden our light under a basket. Did you know, that the teachings of Jesus are not contingent on a certain type of government? Isn't that good news? The teachings of Jesus have the power to transform a society regardless of that society's government. Millions of lives are being transformed by the love of Jesus in the midst of communist China. Guess where the fastest growing Church in the world is today – Iran. Some estimate there are now a million believers there. The early Church flipped the world upside down for God during a time when you could be killed for being a Christian. Jesus has authorized us to disciple nations and to teach everything He commanded. If you are in government, you are called to disciple that sphere toward the King. If you are a student, take extreme ownership over your school and disciple it toward the King. We need to take extreme ownership over our communities and workplaces to disciple them toward the King. How does a Nation change? Not from the top down. It changes when the hearts of the people in that Nation are transformed by the power of Jesus one life at a time. Jesus said it's like a mustard seed that starts off tiny but then grows into a massive tree. Or it's like a little bit of yeast that works its way into the entire batch of dough. Never underestimate the small things you do for the Kingdom. Do not despise humble beginnings. You don't need to be great to start, but you do need to start to be great.

***OG Discussion Question: What specific thing can you do to consistently influence your sphere of influence toward the Kingdom?***

## 3. Make Life Whole

As we close, I want you to think about Jesus' approach to changing the world. Jesus knew the world needed saving but His approach was not to establish a political party. He didn't come like a king we might expect. He didn't come in economic strength, in military might, or political influence. He wasn't holding packed out rallies in stadiums and arenas. He didn't have a savvy social media presence. He didn't debate people on Facebook. He didn't do any of the things we might expect.

*"Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the Kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is in your midst," (Luke 17:20-21).*



We want to put our faith and hope in something we can see – A president, a party, a nation. But Jesus said, “My Kingdom is not of this world. You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ That nation has it, or that party has it.” The Kingdom of God is not confined to a place or a party. The Kingdom is all around us, among us, within us. Jesus came to establish a Kingdom – not a physical kingdom but a spiritual kingdom. Not a temporal kingdom but one that is everlasting. The Kingdom of God begins with a revolution of the heart, not of civil government. God’s Kingdom turns our affections from this fallen world to the interests of Heaven.

As King, Jesus came not to be served but to serve. He came to empower us to walk in our authority. That’s the kind of King we serve. Don’t abdicate the authority God has given you. Don’t try to be like everybody else. You’re not like everybody else. You’ve been blessed to be a blessing. So let’s take extreme ownership over our world and influence the people in our life toward the Kingdom.