

# OpenTheo

## Q&A#54 The Two Kingdoms

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Today's question: "Could you say more about the Two Kingdoms theology—especially how it need not fall back into a narrow pietism?"

Brad Littlejohn, 'The Two Kingdoms: A Guide for the Perplexed' - <https://amzn.to/2MRufFH>.

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## Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, could you say more about the Two Kingdoms theology, especially how it need not fall back into a narrow pietism? So the Two Kingdoms theology is often associated with Westminster West, with the, what's being called the Escondido theology, associated with people like David Van Druenen, Michael Horton, and Daryl Hart, people like that. And that particular understanding of the Two Kingdoms is a distinct one from the one that I hold to.

It's often associated with the idea of just distinguishing between the church as an institution, the state as an institution, and carving out a realm that's merely temporal, restricting faith to a special realm, and then creating this realm of religious neutrality. That's the way things have often been understood. And that may be unfair to some of the people who advocate that position, as many of them have a bit more of a subtle approach on it.

But that's often what people hear when they hear about Two Kingdoms. And that's not actually what I hold to, nor is it a position that has been the general one of Protestant history. The Protestant position in most of its iterations has been far more subtle than

that.

And it makes some important distinctions that I hope will help us to make some significantly clarifying judgments about the place of the church in society, about the place of the state, about the relationship between Christ's rule and both of those, and then the place of the Christian as they act within both of these realms. One book I've found extremely helpful on these issues, just as an introduction, it's the book that I recommend to people who want to think about this for the first time, is my friend, Brad Littlejohn's, *The Two Kingdoms, A Guide for the Perplexed*. I highly recommend this book, and I'll read out a section of it that gets to the core of some of these issues.

For the reformers, Two Kingdoms doctrine was not primarily about church and state, or even necessarily political theology more broadly construed, even if it had very important implications for political theology, which we will explore in this book. The Two Kingdoms were not two institutions or even two domains of the world, but two ways in which the kingship of Christ made itself felt in the life of each and every believer. As such, they were tangled up with all the various forms of two-ness that run throughout Christian theology on every front, God and the world, special revelation and general revelation, redemption and creation, divine grace and human response, faith and works, justification and sanctification, soul and body, invisible and visible, church and world, et cetera.

Theology quite clearly cannot do well without clear distinctions between any of these pairs, even if equally clearly, it can shipwreck by too sharply opposing any of these two terms to one another. At each point, a delicate balancing act is in order. Of course, good theology must also be careful not to treat all these distinctions as just different versions of the same fundamental duality, a temptation that some overzealous Two Kingdoms theorists have been prone to.

Merely to pick one example, we obviously cannot equate the redemption-creation pair with the soul-body pair, since scripture speaks clearly of the redemption and resurrection of our bodies. At the same time, it would be an untidy theology indeed that made no attempt to map these various dualities onto one another at all. For instance, for Protestants at least, divine grace, faith and justification all fit together well on one side in distinction from human response, works and sanctification on the other.

And so what we have here is not a sharp line between two spheres of jurisdiction. So the church over here and then the state over here, and they each have their realm of jurisdiction. And that's the Two Kingdoms distinction.

No, that's not the distinction. A more felicitous distinction might be between two governments or two forms of Christ's rule, two modes of Christ's rule within the world. The church is, and once this is recognised, it will become clear that the church is not purely the spiritual kingdom.

The church has one foot within the spiritual kingdom and one foot within the earthly and temporal kingdom. And these two forms of government are at play within the life of the church. And so that distinction is, as I hope I'll show in this discussion, one that really has some important consequences.

And often what these things will work out as are two perspectives on the same reality. So we have the church and the church can be viewed from the perspective of the spiritual kingdom and from the perspective of the earthly and temporal. And it's the same reality, but viewed from two perspectives.

So the difference between the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom and the form of government that exists between them is one can command conduct, but it can't bind conscience. So the state or the rule of the church, the forms of church government and things like that, and the leadership of the church, they can direct our conduct and they can command certain things, but they can't bind our conscience. This is not something that you have to do in order to be saved.

And that distinction is very important. And the ruling of conduct is a matter of discretion and prudence, a judgment. And again, that's important because all of these things have the effect of desacralizing authority.

So there is the authority of God, the authority of God that can bind our conscience. And then there's this secondary authority, this indirect mediated authority in the earthly kingdom where Christ rules, but he rules indirectly and through mediation of ministers who hold the sword, who exercise judgment, whether that's within the realm of the church or within the realm of the state or within some other realm entirely, within the realm of the family, for instance. These are all areas that are governed by prudence, by discretion.

They are not realms where our obedience is a matter of absolute, it's not a matter of our salvation. It doesn't bind our conscience in the same way. Rather, it directs our conduct and it rightly directs our conduct.

And so it's not inappropriate to have laws and to have forms of church government, to have forms of polity that we are to be subject to. But we're subject to those, not as to God's authority directly, but to a mediated authority, to authority that is fallible and that is weak and that does not have that ultimate character to be able to bind our conscience. And this is something that is something that can save us from tyrannies.

It can save us from sacralized government, from government that presents itself as having the right to bind consciences. It can protect us from church leaders that treat church government as a matter of salvation. If you obey your church leaders or if you disobey them, that's a question of whether or not you're going to be saved.

The doctrine of the two kingdoms stands clearly against that. That's one of the things that's intended to protect us from. Worth remembering the context in which this doctrine was really most developed in the context of the struggle with Rome and in the context of thinking about how the authority of the state, the authorities of the church and other things like that can relate to the individual Christian without binding their conscience, without assuming that ultimate authority that belongs to Christ in his direct rule in the spiritual kingdom.

And so there's often distinctions made on a sort of inward, outward or internal external axis. So, or horizontal vertical, horizontal about our relationships with our neighbours within the context of this age and vertical are the soul's relationship with God. And those two different relationships were constantly invested in in different ways.

And those interact with each other in various respects, but there's a different mode at work relating to those different axes. So when we're talking about our direct relationship with God, there's a different sort of rule that occurs there. It's a direct rule.

It's a direct relationship of the soul to God as its master and creator. When we're relating to the authorities that God has set up within the world, these are not on the same order. There's a different sort of rule that occurs there.

There's a different sort of law that operates there. And so these distinctions are significant. Significant.

The forum of inner conscience and the forum of outer action need to be distinguished. So it's appropriate for me to obey church authorities. It's appropriate for me to follow church practices, to submit to the form of the church, the government of the church of which I'm a member.

That is not the same thing as an absolute submission to God's law in a way that is appropriate and related to salvation. It's not a matter of absolute faith. There's a different order of law at operation here.

And so there's, once the order of the church has been placed within the general running, prudential running of the body politic, there's a lot more scope for things like church government to take different forms. Now, many people have thought about church government as something that has an absolutely proper form, that there's only one way to do things. But yet when you look in scripture, there's a lot of variation.

And even when we do see these things mentioned in scripture, what we often see is not a divine law, you must do things this way, as a prudential order that is established upon moral principles, often principles that are given by God. And so there is a moral law order that is not necessarily directly related to salvation, but helps us to regulate properly the order of the temporal kingdom. It helps us to order church government,

things like that.

And so there's prudence and all these other things at play there, but it leaves us a lot more latitude. And so one context might have a Presbyterian form of government, another might have an Anglican form of government. Is one absolutely right and the other wrong? No, that need not be the case.

Both of them can be perfectly appropriate. They can be prudential applications of general moral principles of order that are tailored to their different contexts. And so this allows for a lot more latitude and prudence, and it does not deny that God has given us certain principles, but it gives those principles their proper weight.

So when you look through scripture, you'll see a lot of things in scripture that are very much absolute things related to the spiritual kingdom. And then there are many other things that are temporal kingdom related laws and principles, things that are contextually bound, things that might change under certain circumstances. And so many of the decisions and the judgments that we see within the narratives of scripture are contextual.

And there are fundamental principles of justice that are often at play there. There's no reason why we must come to the same decisions. We find ourselves in a different context and we can take that we're to take our faculties of judgment and discernment to reflect upon natural order, to reflect upon the structure of creation that God has given us.

And we're to reflect also upon the wisdom that God has given us in scripture. And then we're going to come to our own assessments of what is proper to do. That does not mean that every sort of action is right.

That's a free for all. That's not the case. The fact that something's an area of wisdom doesn't mean that it's an area where there's no culpability for being foolish.

And a lot of people are foolish and culpably so, and sinful in seeking to resist wisdom and proper ways of doing things. But that's not the same thing as the order of the spiritual kingdom. And so that sort of distinction is one that has to be made if we're going to save consciences from being oppressed and from people who will exert tyranny over other people's consciences.

It also gives us a lot more recognition of the limitations of what we have in scripture for many of the questions that we face. Scripture is sufficient, but scripture is sufficient for the purposes for which it has been given. And those purposes chiefly relate to the spiritual kingdom, the rule of Christ in relationship to the human heart and soul and our response to Christ in faith.

But when we see a lot of the questions that we have in society, those are prudential

judgements. Now God has given us moral law and he has given us direction that will help us to think about these things. But much of what we will have to determine is a matter of wisdom.

We do not know what the best form of government is in a particular context. We don't know what the best way of setting up a certain social system might be. What is the best way of raising your kids or practising psychology? Many people go to scripture expecting it to answer all these sorts of questions.

And in the end, end up weakening the testimony of scripture. Because what they do is they import all these different judgements into scripture, taking these very loose details from scripture and putting such weight upon those that it does not bear them. And you have this very brittle text as a result.

And people see that sort of Christianity, that sort of legalistic Christianity. And often they can be very wounded by it and then recoil from scripture more generally. What we need to do is recognise that within scripture, there is a focus of scripture in relationship to the spiritual kingdom.

There are principles and decisions and judgements that are given in relationship to the temporal kingdom on many occasions. And those principles are principles that are not just ones that we can ignore. These are things that should inform our judgement.

But often we'll find that they are contextual things that they do not apply in every time and space. There are things that can change. So the mosaic principles for ordering ancient Israelite society are good principles, but they are contextual principles.

They are principles for that society in that particular time. What they reveal is that there is a moral order within the world and that that moral order can be prudentially recognised and legislated. And we can legislate according to that moral order.

We live within a creation. This world is not just an autonomous entity that has no order to itself. It has an order and that order is a creational order.

And so we're responsible when we are making judgements in the temporal realm, in the earthly kingdom, we're supposed to make these judgements prudentially according to the order of creation. And within scripture, we have a lot of guidance about what that involves, what good works actually involve. But what we do not have is the sort of legalistic clarity that some people are looking for, or this comprehensive judgement on each and every single issue.

And what happens when people look for that is often they just end up legislating their pet theories, theories that often have very little to do with scripture whatsoever, but just use scripture as to underwrite their particular theory that has not really been derived from scripture. And so what we have in a recognition of the two kingdoms is a deflation

of many of these approaches, a recognition that although we have moral principles and certain things, and we have an understanding of the natural order that is given within that and elsewhere, and as we reflect upon the world, that we do not have a comprehensive system that combined people's consciences. And so what we need to do is apply prudence and have debates and to exercise reason and to engage with tradition, which is reason extended over time, to think about government, which is the corporate exercise of wisdom exercised upon the political body.

And in these respects, that's how we have proper political judgement. Now, what many people have done as Christians in an overweening confidence in what we are given in scripture, what they have done is imposed all sorts of imprudent political and economic notions upon Christians' consciences and said that this is what is required for you when you're living within, when you're voting, when you're acting within society, when you're thinking about running your business, these are the things that are required for you and give those things, and they have given those things a weight that is one that is only proper to those things that belong to the order of salvation. So there's very careful distinctions to be made here.

The distinctions that we're drawing are not distinctions that say the earthly kingdom or the temporal kingdom is outside of Christ's jurisdiction. No, it's not outside of Christ's jurisdiction. It's a mode of Christ's jurisdiction, but it's an indirect mediated realm of jurisdiction.

It's one which requires prudence, one which is ordered according to natural order and natural law, and those things can be illuminated by scripture. I discussed scripture's relationship to natural law a few videos back, and within that, I discussed the way that scripture is not just a set of prescriptions about what we should do, but what we often find in relationship to natural law is a declaration of the moral order, a declaration of the divine law as it applies to the creational order, but in a way that draws attention to what is within the natural order. It gives us a vantage point where we can see what is true about the world as God has created it, and so what we can do is we can debate about that.

We can argue about that to persuade people, and they don't have to have a belief in God to actually recognize this a lot of the time because it's there in reality. This is not something that is just created as a positive law by God's word when we have statements like shall not kill and things like that or don't commit adultery. These are principles that we should be able to arrive at from reflection upon natural order.

Natural law and exercise of reason, exercise of prudence and judgment and all these sorts of things should confirm or scripture confirms all of those things and gives us a clearer apprehension of these realities within the creation, and God speaks to these realities with authority, but that authority is not the sort of authority that is always clear

in its concrete applications, and so the idea that we should help the poor, for instance, many people have presumed that that requires a particular sort of welfare policy, a particular sort of health system. It doesn't. It doesn't require that you elect a certain person to office.

It leaves those things in the realm of prudence, and it deflates a lot of the weight that we put upon these things, a lot of the ways in which we raise issues beyond their proper level, and so that's one of the most important things that this does for our engagement in politics. It has the negative move of deflating some of the weight that we put upon these principles, making the matters of absolute divine law and something that is related to the order of salvation, and on the other hand, it propels us into the realm of creation, propels us into the realm where God has ordered his world as the creator of it, and he has given us light upon it, and we can prudentially reason about that and bring that reason to bear upon our political questions and our social issues, and as Christians, at the same time, it leads to a certain modesty of judgment, but also leads to a different sort of confidence that we can make judgments in the world that don't just depend upon hoping for a revival and everyone's heart being changed and suddenly accepting some divine law that he's given. Rather, we recognize that there is an order of creation.

Scripture speaks and gives light into that order and testifies to that order, but we can reason about that order with people in society because they're in that order too, whether they like it or not, and so this also deflates the pretensions of church governments, of states as well. There are many ways in which civil government has had these overweening pretensions to messianic, some sort of messianic rule, bringing in some kingdom, whether that's a Soviet government promising some sort of socialist utopia or whether it's something else in the West. We see the promises of democracy or things like that.

These pretensions, these idolatries are brought down to size too, and so what we have is a recognition of the danger of prescriptive binding of conscience, the deflation of authorities that assume a messianic pretension, and then we also have the equipping and the direction of Christians into the work of prudence and judgment and discretion, which is a different sort of thing from just applying laws as if those were things were as clear as many suppose and could bind people's consciences. So human law is derived from reflection upon natural law, prudentially applied to a particular body by a corporate will, and it's something that can be informed and enlightened by divine law that we find in scripture. When we read the moral law, it is something that helps us to make these sorts of judgments, and it helps us to speak to these social questions, but it's not something that's peculiarly, it's not something that's peculiarly religious, it's something that belongs to the order of creation, but that order of creation is also an order of creation, and it's important to stress that, that it's something that is related to its creator, and so as we're doing this, we should also appeal to the end for which this is, and that's part of the witness of the people of God that we are witnessing to the one who



has created this order, the one to whom we must submit, not just the one who has created this order, but the one who is going to redeem, and resurrect, and glorify, and restore, and renew this order, and so there is this twofold recognition, first of all, of an inherent order within the world, of an order that needs to be ruled, that is indirectly and ruled by Christ through the mediation of stewards, and which requires reason, and prudence, and judgment, which is contextual, and limited, and fallible, and then it also requires this recognition of another authority that's distinct from that, God's Christ-direct rule in the spiritual kingdom.

Now, this applies to church government as well. Take the example of church discipline. When someone is excommunicated, are they cut off from Christ? And that's an important question, because if we believe that excommunication cuts someone off from Christ, we are placing a sort of authority within the ministry of the church that raises it up to the power of the spiritual government, but if we say that it has no effect whatsoever, what does it mean? Well, the point is that the work of the church should be according to the truth of the spiritual kingdom.

The church is to be a sign of the spiritual kingdom, reflecting in its life the truth of the spiritual kingdom. There's a sort of sacramental-type reality to this, that there is a relationship between the sign and the thing signified, between the visible and the invisible church, and the rule of the visible church needs to be done with a recognition of the fallibility of its rule, the limitations of its rule that occurs within the earthly, temporal kingdom, that church government, although it is exercised in the name of Christ, although there is the exercise of church government under the appointment of Christ to represent Christ's rule, that representation does not have the direct authority of Christ, as Christ has within the spiritual kingdom, and so someone who is wrongfully excommunicated is not cut off from Christ. That judgment is not according to truth, and so it is not effective.

Rather, it is something, that person is still in union with Christ, and their judgment is false, and so there has to be a representation of the truth of affairs, and this is very important, I think, for, again, dealing with some of the tyranny of certain forms of church government, certain forms of church government that would so associate themselves with the spiritual kingdom of Christ that they make claims for their discipline that are very dangerous, and so this undermines sacralized government. Church government and the government of his ministers in the state is ordained by God, but it's much more limited in its authority and its finality, and there's danger here of immunizing the eschaton that a doctrine of two kingdoms stands against, so church leaders do not speak with the absolute authority of God to all sorts of issues, and again, this is something that requires incredible prudence, because the church leader is, at the same time, speaking with, in a way that's far more directly related to the spiritual kingdom, but he also needs to speak into issues of the earthly, temporal kingdom. He needs to speak to people's heart, calling them to faith, but he also needs to direct them towards good works, and

those good works within the realm of society, who are you going to vote for? There is a danger of many church leaders that they presume that the authority and the direction that Christ gives in relation to the spiritual kingdom and the truth that is given in that sort of context can settle all these sorts of questions of prudence, which it does not settle, and as a result, there's an excessive claim to authority that Christ's authority will tell you who you have to vote for.

Christ's authority will tell you what sort of foreign policy we should adopt, what way we should approach the questions of immigration, what way we should approach the running of our welfare system, whatever it is, or our healthcare system. Scripture just does not do that. Rather, these things are matters of prudence, and the fact that we have fundamental moral principles and we have the moral law that gives us a foundation from which to act faithfully within the created order, to which that applies, that does not settle all these prudential questions.

Again, that doesn't mean that these questions are just, you can do whatever you want. There is a matter of folly that is culpable, as I said, and also there's a direct resistance to the moral law, to the law of creation, to the way that Christ rules within the temporal order, and there's a way that we can oppose that rule in different ways, and so there are many ways that we can speak to this in issues related to society, on issues like abortion, for instance. There are all sorts of prudential questions around abortion, and those questions should not be settled merely by divine command, but it's also very clear that there is a direct opposition to a fundamental truth of the moral law, that you shall not kill, and abortion clearly falls foul of that, and so what we can do is we can speak very directly in some ways to these sorts of things, pointing out the moral order of creation, a moral order that is illumined by the light of God's word, but then we can relate that to the prudential questions that we have, which are considerably more complicated, and those require judgment, judgment that needs to be wise, that needs to be accountable.

It's not a judgment that we're just allowed to do whatever we want, but it allows us to recognize difference on those sorts of issues. The pastor can give judgments and can give suggestions on these sorts of issues without declaring that it's a salvation matter. That doesn't mean that it's not an important matter, that it's not an area of Christian obedience, that it's a recognition of these different orders that are at play, and so that distinction is very important for pastors, and pastors are constantly breaking this distinction and trespassing upon the, bringing the spiritual authority of binding conscience to bear upon questions of politics, questions of church government, questions of social policy, of business, whatever it is, and that's dangerous.

What we do need to do is give wisdom and prudence and direction and insight into the moral law and to natural law and the natural order of the creation, but we must do that with a clear distinction between the authority with which the spiritual kingdom is ruled and the sort of mediated, indirect, and less certain judgments that apply within the

realm of the earthly and temporal kingdom. So this does not mean neutrality. It does not mean that these areas are just up for grabs.

They belong to the creator and the redeemer, and they must be related to the creator and redeemer, but it also does leave us with the church as largely an earthly and temporal order. In its forms of government, in its forms of organization, it's not a matter of divine law what time you meet on a Sunday morning, or it's not a matter of absolute divine law related to salvation, what posture the pastor takes when speaking or preaching, or how long the sermon should be. These are all matters of prudence, whether you follow a church calendar or not, and in these sorts of areas, the body of the church in its earthly government can direct conduct.

So we can say that government of the church can say, we are going to practice the church calendar, and these are the different weeks of Lent, for instance, or that we are going to celebrate Easter on this particular day, or that we will celebrate using particular forms of rite. And also it's a recognition of the place that the state can play, and the state can protect the order of the church. That as both these things exist within the temporal realm, there can be prudence in that relationship.

So the queen, Her Majesty the Queen, is the supreme governor of the Church of England. That's not an absolute principle that every country must have a monarch, and every monarch must be the head of, must be the supreme governor of the church. That's not the case.

But nor is it the case that this is some order that should be condemned by scripture. I don't think it is condemned by scripture. Rather, it's a prudential ordering of the church within a particular context and within particular times.

There will come a time soon, I'm pretty sure, where this order will no longer be the most prudential order. And that's because what monarchy means will have changed. The sort of monarch that we have will have changed.

And what the Church of England is, and how that relates to the broader society, that relationship has changed remarkably, and it is going to change even further still. And so for those reasons, that sort of order can change. It's a prudential, temporal, and temporary order.

And so we have modest pronouncements in these sorts of areas. And there's something inherently conservative about this as well. Conservative as opposed to being about conservatism.

Conservatism is about an ism. It's about more abstract principles that apply in all times and spaces. Conservative is about an attention to the specific context in which we are placed, about the prudential judgments that apply within that context.

And it's far more modest in its claims. It's far more limited. It recognizes the limitations of authority, the bounds of authority.

It recognizes our situation as fallible creatures with the needs for balances and things to protect against our sin. It recognizes the importance of prudence and reason exercised over long periods of time and in the corporate body. And so the importance of tradition as a form of reason extended through time and the importance of reason through representatives and the corporate body's binding of itself through laws.

And so there is something conservative about this. Conservative in many ways that a conservatism that is recognized, that is founded upon the recognition of the limitations of authority, the limitations of rule and the limitations of what we can claim for human government. And that is a very good thing.

There are a lot of governments that raise themselves to make more absolute claims about absolutes that will apply in all times and spaces and that will steamroll all particularities of time and space and context and often are very oppressive as a result. They will seek to bind people's consciences in various ways, claiming things that are matters of prudence are matters of absolute law and beyond the prudential and deliberative judgments and debates that are required in the realm of the earthly kingdom for its rule. And so I think this distinction is a very important one for informing our politics.

It's not quite what people suppose. It's a lot more complicated than a simple distinction between church and state. It's more complicated than a distinction between two different realms.

I mean, the same realm, the same realm of the church, for instance, is at once related to the spiritual kingdom and to the earthly kingdom. As recognizing that we have one foot within each that helps us to exercise church government and to teach in a way that's appropriate, in a way that does not bind people's consciences in a way that is wrong, but also speaks the authority of Christ to them. And this I think is particularly important in a day and age where we have a lot of speech going on by church leaders, a lot of speech that is taking place within the more general realm of the temporal kingdom.

As we speak on Twitter, as we speak in blogs, as we speak in various other fora, there is that temptation to bring the authority of the pastorate and the way that it relates the truths of the spiritual kingdom to people's hearts and consciences and relates the truth of Christ to people, binding their consciences by the truth of Christ. And to bring that authority to bear upon who people vote for, upon their judgments, or upon questions of society, of technology, of all sorts of issues of how to raise your kids, of how to approach issues of healthcare, of how to deal with mental illness. And there's all sorts of damage that's been done by this failure to draw these distinctions.

And so drawing these distinctions is not a matter of retreating from the public square, retreating from the state, retreating from all these areas of life that Christ does rule within. Christ does rule within the temporal kingdom. And we are supposed to ensure that that temporal kingdom is related to its creator and its redeemer.

But we're supposed to do so in a way that does not claim for ourselves the absolute authority of God, does not bind consciences, and that recognizes the role of prudential judgments and the limited, more modest forms of authority that are exercised as mediated and indirect within those realms. And that I believe can do an awful lot of good. It can, apart from anything else, when you stop thinking that the Bible just gives you a set of answers to all these questions, you stop thinking, you start reflecting upon the prudential approach to these sorts of questions.

No longer is the question, for instance, of immigration going to be solved by a direct word from the Old Testament or the New Testament about strangers or about hospitality or about maintaining the land for Israel. Whatever it is, that's not going to settle the question. Those are prudential, limited judgments within the temporal kingdom and within a particular context in the Old Testament.

They can inform and enlighten our deliberations, but we must think, we must exercise our reason. And the judgments that we arrive at will not come with the same, thus says the Lord authority, that many people would desire, but they will be far more informed and healthy judgments as a result. And so that is the distinction that is taking place.

And I think once we've drawn that distinction, we will not be withdrawing from politics. We'll be entering into it in a far more intelligent and informed and thoughtful and engaged fashion, a fashion that is attentive to reality, the stuff of reality that takes scripture and allows scripture to shed its light upon the world. And in that light, to see its natural order, to see its creational order, to call people to testify to the creator within that realm, to act as a sign and a witness of the spiritual kingdom in the earthly form of the church, and to be people who, as we faithfully live in these two spaces, as those who are both justified in the arena of conscience and also still sinners and fallible and limited in our judgments and our wisdom in the realm of the earthly kingdom, to recognize that we are both these people at once and that living faithfully requires a recognition of the balance between those things.

And not trying to bring the certainty and the strength of authority of the one to the other, nor to bring the indirectness and the mediation and all these sorts of things to the authority of Christ and his kingdom, which is often what has happened within the church when the authority of the church has been lifted up too high, and it's seen itself as the mediator of the spiritual kingdom. What you end up with is a prudential and imprudent form of earthly authority, binding people's consciences. And so maintaining these distinctions is incredibly important for the health of the body politic, for the exercise of

prudence and proper judgment within the political realm, and just for a greater modesty for Christians who often think that since we have the scripture, we have the answer to life, the universe, and everything, and that we can answer every single question that politics might throw at us, every single question economics throws at us.

We don't have all those answers, but we have been given these, and we can think about things in the light of scripture and in the light of the creational order. And that, I think, is the strength of the doctrine of the two kingdoms as it applies in the political realm. If you have any further questions, please leave them on my Curious Acat account.

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Some of you may not know that there are both these forms available, and so now you do. And I hope to be back again tomorrow, Lord willing, and I'll answer another question. God bless, and thank you very much for listening.