

The Rise of the Second Kingdom

Unfortunately, few of us would claim to be complete. committed, holistic, one-kingdom people Despite our desire to be totally and solely committed to Jesus Christ and to give everything to him we hold back parts of our lives from God. As we do, we build a second kingdom Jesus met this temptation head-on at the outset of his public ministry. The third and final temptation that Satan laid before Jesus following his baptism was the invitation to be lord over his own kingdom, apart from the kingdom of God Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All of this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." (Matthew 4:8-9)

Before Jesus could proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God, Satan offered him a second kingdom of his own. Jesus rejected this temptation, but if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we all build second kingdoms over which we serve as lord. They consist of the things over which we seek to maintain control, such as time, possessions, relationships, reputation and future. At each of the four levels is a temptation to carve out a place where we can play the owner and ruler over some aspect of it. And so we build our earthly kingdoms and rely on them to ascribe to us a large measure of our self-worth, satisfaction and security.

The last thing in the world that the enemy wants is for you and me to be completely committed to Jesus Christ. Our enemy shows us, too, the splendor of kingdoms that he wants to give us and over which we can play the king. He desperately wants to divert our attention, sow the seeds of discontent, confuse, deceive and twist the truth just enough so that we become comfortable with those small compromises that later grow into major distortions.

I preached a sermon recently in which I used a wooden box to hide what I claimed to be a treasure beyond all imaginable value. I said that in that box was the one item that kings and presidents go to war over, that wealthy and powerful people spend their entire lives pursuing, and that every person in the church that morning would give everything they owned to possess, if even for just a moment.

I turned my back to the congregation, opened the box and revealed the highly coveted item—a magician's wand. But this was no ordinary wand, this one magical device had the power to give to its bearer complete control over any and every area of his life. With it a person could control health and finances, manipulate the stock market, change the outcome of sporting events and determine the weather. The bearer could alter the behavior of others, smite his or her enemies, even the score for all the injustices in life and make things right where he or she had been wronged. The one who used the wand could get a better job improve the behavior of his or her spouse and kids, buy a bigger house and take a vacation anywhere in the world.

The wand represented the control we so long to have over our life. It is the desire for power, for the ability to shape things so they come out our way to be the lord of our lives and the people and things that comprise it. We believe that if we just had more control, our life would be better, we could make things come out the way we want and guide our own destiny

This is the best way I can illustrate second kingdom building. It is less about our stuff than about our hearts, but it is about our stuff as well.

It is the struggle between God's kingdom and a counterfeit earthly kingdom we want to label as "ours." It is ultimately about lordship.