

**The Two Kingdoms (as Ordained by Christ)
and Our Dual Citizenship**

Christ's Kingdom	The Civil Kingdom
This is a spiritual kingdom, ruled by Christ in his mediatorial office (the kingdom of grace), in and through the word and Spirit, as manifest in the administration of the Covenant of Grace (the church)	Here we speak of civil government (the state) as ruled by Christ according to his providential care of the Earth and its creatures (the kingdom of power), according to God's divine purpose for humanity (his eternal decree)
The charter of Christ's kingdom is the "Great Commission" (cf. Matthew 28:16-20)	The charter of the civil kingdom is the "Cultural Mandate" (Genesis 1:28)
The church is given the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19). Unrepentant members and heretical teachers are subject to church discipline	The state is given the sword (Romans 13:4). Those who break the law are subject to civil and criminal justice
Requires "spiritual discernment" (1 Corinthians 1:13 ff; 2:14)	Requires the light of nature (Romans 2:14-15)
Christ's kingdom is manifest on earth through the ordinary means of grace and through those biblically commanded activities of the church (i.e., evangelism, discipleship, and diaconal ministries)	The civil kingdom is manifest in all human cultural endeavors and governing institutions. In the civil kingdom, Christian citizens seek to be salt and light as they fulfill their callings and vocations along with non-Christians
The focus is upon our heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20)—which is realized in our membership in Christ's church as the assembly of Christian believers	Here we speak of our national citizenship (i.e., the country of our birth). As such, this kingdom includes all people (Christians and non-Christians alike) in our various communities
Entrance is granted into this kingdom only by virtue of regeneration. The focus here is upon redemptive grace—God saving his people	Entrance into the civil kingdom is granted by virtue of birth. The focus here is upon common grace—God providing for his creatures
As citizens of Christ's kingdom, we live under the authority of Christ as he commands in Scripture (special revelation)	In the civil kingdom, we live under the authority of the laws of the land (i.e., general revelation and natural law)

Notes:

- 1). Christ has established both kingdoms and rules them according to their particular distinctives and purposes (as spelled out above).
- 2). The two kingdoms (as classically understood by the Reformed) should not be confused with the secularist understanding of the separation of church (sacred–“faith”) and state (secular–“reason”).
- 3). The Christian is inescapably and simultaneously a citizen of both kingdoms. In the civil kingdom, the Christian participates as a “Christian” citizen and remains bound in conscience to obey God’s word.
- 4). The state is a post-fall, common grace institution given by God for the administration of justice and to restrain evil (Genesis 4:18 ff; Romans 13:1-7).
- 5). Non-Christians do not accept or acknowledge Christ's Lordship over the civil kingdom. This is the basis for the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian ways of thinking and doing. The failure to acknowledge Christ's Lordship renders one guilty before God (Romans 1:18-25), but does not invalidate the civil kingdom, or the non-Christian's place in it.
- 6). From the time Adam was cast from Eden, God has intended the kingdom of Christ (the church) to dwell and advance in the midst of the civil kingdom (the world). This is the foundation for the missionary endeavors of the church, as well as a hedge against either utopianism (an over-realized eschatology) or escapism (i.e., monasticism).
- 7). While Paul calls Rome a minister of God (Romans 13:4), a generation later John describes that same empire as the beast, empowered by the dragon to persecute the people of God (Revelation 13). The Christian’s confession that “Jesus is Lord,” is likewise a confession that Caesar isn’t. Christians must be cognizant that the kingdom of Christ can be seen as a threat to the power of the state. In fact, throughout Scripture, the state is the dragon's weapon of last resort against Christ and his kingdom.
- 8). When these two kingdoms are confused or conflated, we see the rise of the “social gospel” of Protestant liberalism, American civil religion of the Christian right and the liberal left, as well as the rise of Constantianism (Christendom). The church must never take up the sword and Caesar must never enter the pulpit.
- 9). When the Christian’s dual citizenship is denied (or ignored), we see the rise of asceticism, pietism, radical pacifism, and Anabaptism.
- 10). Therefore, a Christian is free to co-operate with non-Christians in the civil kingdom in promoting the common good, and preserving a just and peaceful society.
- 11). The kingdom of Christ is primarily manifest in word and sacrament, and in the midst of the church (and its officers and members), as the church exercises its divine mandate.
- 12). The church must speak to the pressing moral issues of the day using the categories of law and gospel, and not in terms of political activism or the heated rhetoric found in the civil kingdom. The church must address moral issues as they are found and framed in Scripture (the preaching and catechetical function of the church), but the church is not to engage in partisan politics, nor endorse any political party or specific candidate.