

Two kingdoms – two ways

The probably *most central theme* in the entire bible - *both subliminal as well as expressed clearly* -, about which *even the Risen Messiah* spoke more than about anything else, is *the one thing* what it's all about, what everything heads for and what will remain forever: **The kingdom of God.**

- Which *on the one hand* is already *here and in our midst*, but *on the other hand* is still *yet to come* and *be manifested* in all its fullness and glory.

Likewise, the Bible makes it *just as clear* that there is currently still *another, fundamentally different kingdom also* that confronts the first one *incompatibly with it*, namely the **kingdom of this world**, whose ruler Jesus reveals as **Satan**. (compare Joh 14:30; 16:11; 2Cor 4:4) - That is therefore *ultimately influenced, shaped and determined by him*.

In that *kingdom of the world* solely man is in the center, or *originating from him* also *other idols*, such as *money*, which *rules over one and whom one serves*, or *carnal desire*; it is characterized by *own human ways, own wisdom and control*, and therein ultimately *pride and arrogance*.

While in the *kingdom of God* only HE is the center. It is determined by *faith, trust, loving fellowship and surrender to Him*. Of letting *Him be Lord and God* over us, since we know about His *holy character, defined by unfathomable love and absolute goodness*; and equally about *our total dependence on Him*, not only *first of all* concerning *our salvation, our worthiness and righteousness before Him*, but also *our ordinary everyday life*, if we want to bring *truly valuable and eternally significant fruit for His kingdom* in it. It is essentially determined by *humility, obedience and love*.

And the truth is, *each one of us* basically has to decide *every day anew*, which *Lord* he wants to follow, *what* he wants to agree with and *in which of these realms* or *according to which of these patterns* he wants to live, think and act concretely *here and now*. And even those who *do not want to accept this reality or take it seriously* make a decision in the course of it, by simply choosing and walking *their own way*.

What we sow we reap. What we feed on becomes part of us!

We have the power to decide *by whom or what* we let ourselves *be shaped* today: whether and how intensely we either expose ourselves to the *things of the world*, its distraction, diversion, trivialities and lies, *fill us with it and be filled with it* at the end of the day, - Or *the face of God* (in attentive prayer), *His truth and His (written) word*, which is *like food* that strengthens our spiritual man (see Mt 4:4), refreshes us, cleanses us (see Eph 5:26), gives us true knowledge and shows us the way!

"**Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit**" Jesus says (Mt 7:17 NIV), and thus in the long term *we too* will produce what we *absorb*, because we *expose ourselves to it*.

"**For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.**" (Mt 12:34 NIV)

If we fill ourselves with *the same things as the world*, with *senseless talk, half-truths, distraction* and merely the *daily news*, then *the same things* will also come *out of us* as from *other people* (who have *not been born again* and received the Holy Spirit) and the fruit of our lives will be accordingly.

However, if we fill ourselves with *God's word*, the *bread of life*, that is *Jesus Christ Himself*, then His Word will bring forth *life* in us, our spirit will *be filled and strengthened by His Spirit*; it will bring forth *faith, hope and courage* in us, even the ability to be *different*; to think in accordance with *God's truth* and not *in the way of the world*; to be "spicy salt" in our environment and partly even to swim - *like our Lord* - clearly against the tide.

At the same time *receiving His love* will awaken *gratitude, gentleness* and above all *love* in us, which in turn will radiate to *others* in how we *live*, what we *do* and *how* we do it.

At the bottom line we will always experience that *what we previously admit into ourselves, what we feed our minds and souls with*, will ultimately *come forth* from us: Depending on whether we fill ourselves with the sin-blended "*sourdough*" of the world, that *also* has a *kind of life* in it, puffs itself up seductively, but in the end *quickly spoils and dies*, - or with the *unleavened bread of life*, which for *many who are affected by the world* does not seem so attractive at first, but that is *pure*, that *remains* and that *gives us eternal life*.

Whom do we want to serve?

Up to the present day the Father is calling forth *His people, sanctified by His Son*, out of *conformity with this world*, of *lukewarmness, compromise and sin*. Out of *the system of the world*, above all *pride, idolatry on Mammon and material things*, as well as *fornication*, which all poison us.

And it is *very important* for us to understand: We cannot live *in both realms at the same time*:

"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want."(Gal 5:17 NIV)
Paul explains *very clearly* the consequences of our actions: **"For if you live according to the flesh** (that is *the old, sinful nature*), **you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.**"(Rom 8:13 NIV)

◦ The *pride of life*, loving our own wisdom, control, power and ways, is *fundamentally contrary* to the *nature and the way of life* of *Yeshua*, who said of Himself, **"I am gentle and humble in heart"** (Mt 11:29 NIV) and explained that if someone wants to *live like Him and come after Him*, they **"must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."** (Mt 16:24 NIV) - What is *so different*, because then *no longer we* are "Lord", but *God!* Nevertheless *even Yeshua* didn't do *anything* out of Himself, but only what the Father led Him! (Compare John 5:19; 6:38)

◦ *Further* the Son of Man declares that *God and Mammon* cannot reign over us at the same time. If we - *like so many* - serve Mammon *first*, let it determine our goals in life and give it authority over *what we do and don't do*, we will never be free to *concretely* do God's will for us, while experiencing His provision. Money and material things will always bind us, as long as they occupy *God's place as primary source of security (what we concretely trust in!), fulfillment and satisfaction*. Mammon will always let us live egotistically calculating *for ourselves*, even if we may satisfy our *conscience* or even our *pride* (since we are "*good*") by a little charity on the side. However it is *something completely different* if we - *along with our entire live* - also completely submit *our money and possessions to God and His perfect reign*, simply because we *trust Him* and know that *His will* is better than anyone else's. We are thus free to serve *Him alone* and to use everything else according to His wisdom, to receive and pass on *according to His eternal kingdom-ways*, instead of being governed by *self-will, greed and striving for worldly wealth*. While not *these*, but *God and His lasting kingdom* is our reward, our comfort and our joy!

...Because **"those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."**(1Tim 6:9f. NIV) And *we* are *not a bit more* immune to it, even if we want to *persuade ourselves of something different!*

◦ Likewise in the *sexual realm*, the difference between what *the world* calls *normal, acceptable, and good*, is far from what *the Creator of it all* has determined as a standard, namely *the protective framework of marriage* for all sexuality! The eternal, indissoluble covenant between man and woman, which *in turn* is an image of *His covenant with us*, to which He will never be unfaithful from His side! According to divine understanding *a unification* is taking place between two people who are intimate with each other, which shows us, as "*members of Christ*", the *high responsibility in dealing with our bodies*. **"But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."** (1Cor 6:17f. NIV; compare 6:16)

Come out!

God calls *the bride of His holy and beloved Son* out of "Babylon", the city that *from the beginning* stood for the *proud exaltation of man to the place of God*, and that thereby opened all possible gates to sin, impurity, and idolatry; in which there is no room left for JHWH, yes, which *in fact* is even *hostile* to Him. *In this last time* He also calls out to us:

"Come out of her, my people,' so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven..." (Rev 18:4f. NIV).

It's about understanding *who we are*, namely *the body of Messiah*, which is to be *holy*, that means *completely set apart for Him*. **"For God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple."** (1Cor 3:17 NIV) May we listen to the voice of Him Who is *different, exalted, belonging to a whole different league, which however is open to us through Jesus!* Who *from the very beginning and until now* exhorts His people: **"Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God."** (Lev 20:7 NIV). Who calls us into this ongoing process of *complete renewal* by His Spirit.

He wants - *through Messiah dwelling personally in us "by faith"* (Eph 3:17) - that our DNA is characterized by *Him, His Holiness* and not *the nature of this world*, which unfortunately also reaches *far into the structures of the "church" systems*, yes, in a certain degree *even those of our own souls*. But *what a gift* God gives us with *His Own Spirit*, Who - *as far as we let Him, focus on Him and expose ourselves to Him in worshiping* - gradually renews us, completely changes our thinking, our standards and our attitudes. While - *as for Paul* - it becomes more and more *EVERYTHING* to us to know Him, Yeshua, and to *be found in Him*, whereby *everything else* becomes *increasingly insignificant* to us in relation to that.

Oh, when we see *Him*, we know what we are *made for*, what *matters alone*, and what our life is *heading for* towards eternity.

Restoration of the trust-relationship

May we not, *like Eve in the garden*, still be seduced *in the same way* by *the enemy*, who wants to make us *doubt* God's goodness, bring us to the point of *distrusting Him*, and thereby - *in our own wisdom* - go *our own ways*. Based solely on what we *see* and our *natural senses* guide us. Who is still seducing us into this *false freedom*, which, however, is *slavery to our flesh and our sin*; by saying: *'God doesn't mean well for you, go your own way, decide for yourself what is right and wrong'*. (Compare Gen 3:5) Promising *to this day*: **"...you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it..." (Gen 3:5f. NIV)

But let us *take this step back now* into *total trust in our good Father*, from Whom *everything comes* and Who *in the end* doesn't want to deprive us of *any good gift!* Who *for now in this time* only wants to *wean us* from so much, in order to open our senses for something *much bigger*.

Yeshua's successor *John* was aware of the *incomparable greatness* of our calling in Messiah, the *richness* we have in Him and will inherit in His everlasting kingdom.

He knew the *surpassing value of His love* which He has *poured out into us*; the grace that we *leave* when we give priority to useless things and idols. (Compare Jonah 2:8 NIV:

"Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.")

Which is why *the beloved disciple* speaks to the hearts of *all his Lord's followers*:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." (1John 2: 15-17 NIV)

May we therefore *love Him*,

by *knowing Him*,

by *exposing ourselves to Him*

and *not to* what brings us *further from Him* and *cuts us off from Him!*