

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD: Social Good-Works is not the
New Covenant Gospel**

**The Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Perplexity with
the Rich Young Ruler**

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Introduction: Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, cf. Matthew 4:23, et al. The Kingdom of God/Heaven is the main theme of the New Covenant Gospel. Two well-known stories from the life and teaching of Jesus are about the Good Samaritan and the Rich Young Ruler. In Luke's Gospel account these two stories are found in chapters 10 and 18 respectively and between these chapters the Kingdom of God is referenced 16 times.

What is the Kingdom of God/Heaven? This question has been disputed since the days of Jesus and the Apostles but there is sufficient Scripture revelation and teaching to essentially answer, although not exhaustively answer, with assurance.

One of the common missteps in discussions wanting to define and identify the Kingdom of God is to start with the end, i.e. eschatology...[a topic for another time, perhaps the starting place should be the doctrine of the Church].

Another commonly accepted view, perhaps the majority view assumed in the theologically reformed community, is that the Kingdom of God consists of spheres of God's sovereignty over His creation, ill. bicycle or wagon wheel...

In this view the Church is one sphere among others...

Although in current discussions sphere sovereignty is being reassessed and challenged by a revival and recapitulation of two kingdom theology, i.e. Augustine's *The City of God and the City of Man*...

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Lately I have been preaching about the Kingdom of God in the context of a twofold crown or kingship, i.e. the universal sovereignty of the Triune Creator-God and the meditorial rule by Messianic office of the glorified Jesus Christ as King of the Church. By this view the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are related to the Scriptures' applications of the Moral Law of God. With Biblical warrant for this understanding the Kingdom of God/Heaven which Jesus preached and inaugurated through the New Covenant Gospel is defined and identified by the doctrine of the Church: of what is Jesus the Bridegroom, of what is Jesus the Head, of what is Jesus the King?—the Church.

Is this only an academic, intellectual, doctrinal debate removed from the practical concerns of the Christian believer's life of faith? No, the questions arising from views and understandings about the Kingdom of God directly relate to what Gospel expectations Christian believers live with in this sin-fallen world. The general, most encompassing category of issues correlates to Christian, individually as believers and collectively as the Church, participation in secular culture, e.g. is evangelism mutually exclusive of politics, economics, education, poverty, medical ethics, law enforcement, social mores, arts and entertainment, environmental conservation, food production, etc. [cf. sermon: The Kingdom of God and Good Works (under the sun)]...

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New Covenant Gospel, The Parable of the Good Samaritan
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Luke 10:25-37, The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Have you ever thought about this famous parable of Jesus not being named the Parable of the Good Christian? However, a working title of this parable very properly could be named The Parable of the Good Neighbor.

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Jesus' purpose in this parable is not that good works summarized by the 2nd Table of the Law, even identifying social good, are a way of salvation, i.e. eternal life, but just the opposite that if individual or social good works are imperfect here on earth, then human conscience cannot escape eternal accountability to Creator-God by the 1st Table of the Law—to love God supremely and perfectly without ever failing in thought, word, or deed, i.e. if in human relationships no one is sinless, then no one is sinless in relationship to God's absolute holiness, a logical model of reasoning from lesser to greater...

“With it [our tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.” (James 3:9, ESV) “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ [1st Table] and hates his brother [2nd Table], he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20, ESV)

(Remember, James and John were disciples & Apostles personally taught by Jesus and witnessing all His public ministry.)

- A Jewish law-expert stood up tempting Jesus—public gesture of an adversarial contest (cf. Lk. 4:12, et al.)...
- The entrapping question is legally and theologically flawed—inheritance by definition is not received by working/earning (this also begs the question concerning the morality of partiality, cf. Romans 2:11, et al.)...
- The big question is not about earthly inheritance, but eternal life—the acknowledged source is the Scripture revelation of the Law of God, i.e. eternal life only comes from Creator-God His way...
- The summary of the two Tables of the Law is agreed upon—but this also establishes the comprehensive scope and moral accountability of all humans...

- Jesus turned the tables (of God's Law) on this Jewish law expert who was put on the self-righteous defensive and tried to out-smart Jesus with an acknowledged conundrum, i.e. confusing & difficult question—"Who is my neighbor?" [What is the Kingdom God?]

Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan as a good neighbor:

- The example of the priest and Levite set up the contrast—the moral tension is increased by the personal and official expectations of priests and Levites revealed by the Law of Moses...
- A Samaritan is used by example of the universal application of the 2nd Table of the Moral Law—individual compassion and social good works serve as a secondary witness to human inability to keep the 1st Table of the Moral Law perfectly...
- According to Jesus, Samaritan corruption of the 1st Table of the Law in worshipping God was a false religion without the true knowledge of salvation—to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, Jesus stated this emphatically, cf. John 4:21-24...
- Jesus complimented the Jewish law expert's moral sensibility and challenged him to this same kind of mercy—to reconsider how mercy triumphs over self-righteous judgement (cf. James 2:13, et al.) and thus be brought to God's Throne of Grace...

**So the Parable of the Good Samaritan/Neighbor is not a mandate from Christ for social good-works beyond the often repeated N.T. Scriptures applying the ethical injunctions of the 2nd Table of the Moral Law identified in context for accountability to the Triune Creator-God or witnessing to the*

transforming grace of God in Christ by which redeemed sinners are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of God/Heaven.

The same question, "what must I do to inherit eternal life" was put to Jesus by the Rich Young Ruler and again Jesus cites the 2nd Table of the Moral Law of God, cf. Luke 18:18-30:

- The same question with the same legal and theological flaw—one does not inherit by doing...
- The rich ruler initiates his conversation with Jesus by a philosophical and theological paradox—goodness is sourced in God, i.e. only God is essentially and independently good, Jesus is only good if He is God...
- The deep reality of this story should not be missed that Jesus embodies the 1st Table of the Moral Law both in essence—He is God and by incarnation—He is only Mediator between God and humans, i.e. the perfect revealer of God the Father to all humanity...
- Again Jesus uses the 2nd Table of the Moral Law applying the 10th Commandment as the coup de gras to the Rich Ruler's conscience—Jesus is not using the Moral Law as directives for social justice, but to reveal sin in the heart, others had done what Jesus teaches here in response to heart transforming grace, e.g. the Apostle Matthew, et al.

"Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was to

bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment just and good." Romans 7:7-12

**There are multiple uses and benefits of the Moral Law of God, but they are not all of equal effect and the 1st Table of the Moral Law, Commandments 1-4 summarizing the absolute sovereignty of Creator-God and universal accountability to Him, remains a binding authority from the original Covenant of Works on all humanity compounding the guilt of sin witnessed to conscience by the failures from the 2nd Table of the Moral Law irrepressibly excusing, accusing, or begging the need for the Covenant of Grace.*

While not getting into the specifics about the Christian/Church's relationship and involvement with secular culture, the purpose of these several messages about the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world (The twofold Kingdom of God is revealed & unique), the Kingdom of God and good works (creation ordinances & mandates in the secular world), and the Kingdom of God: social good-works is not the New Covenant Gospel (the 1st & 2nd Tables of the Law Biblically expounded in application of the Covenant of Works & Covenant of Grace) was intended to lay a good foundation for building up sanctified conversations informed by expounding & exploring Scripture and not being dogmatic beyond Scripture...

