

LAW VERSUS GRACE (24)

We all have different gifts and abilities given by God and our job is to hone and develop those gifts so we may help build up the body.

QUESTION #14 – What is the Kingdom?

As we have seen in our study of Law versus Grace, we have a distinct period of time when God's governmental system is Law, a distinct period of time when God's governmental system is Grace and a distinct period of time when God's governmental system will be the Kingdom. This Kingdom will be very distinct from Law and from Grace. It is critical that these three systems be recognized or else one will misinterpret many passages of Scripture and do great damage to sound doctrine and true theology.

The Kingdom is a literal period of time of 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-7), in which Jesus Christ is physically on earth reigning over the entire world in total righteousness and in which time Israel has all of her wonderful O.T. promises fulfilled. This Kingdom Age will be an age in which all mankind will realize the righteous reign of Jesus Christ and will honor Him and His special nation Israel.

It is important for the church to realize that **this Kingdom will not be ushered in by a gradual process of world improvement (II Tim. 3:1-9; Rev. 9:20-21; 13:5-8; 17:1-6). It will be ushered in by Divine and dramatic force (Rev. 19:11-21).**

QUESTION #15 – What are the time divisions of these three systems?

The system of the Law was separated from the system of Grace by the first coming of Jesus Christ (**John 1:14, 17**). The system of Grace will be separated from the system of the Kingdom by the second coming of Jesus Christ (**Rev. 19:11-21**).

QUESTION #16 – What are the key words of each of these systems?

Under law the key words are law and obedience. Under grace the key words are grace and believe. Under the Kingdom the key words are righteousness and peace.

QUESTION #17 – Where are the teachings found that pertain to the Kingdom time?

Primarily, the teachings that pertain to the Kingdom period are found in the Psalms, in the O.T. prophets and in portions of the Gospels, specifically in the Gospel of Matthew.

A great deal of Biblical and theological confusion exists because of a failure to recognize these three distinct systems. In fact, it was this type of misunderstanding that caused Israel to reject her King the first time He came.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has written extensively on this point and we believe his conclusions are worthy of consideration here:

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“The national hope of Israel was centered in the genuineness of the claims of both the King and His forerunner. The evidence was carefully weighted, it may be believed, and it was found unimpeachable; but the wickedness of heart prevailed. They imprisoned the forerunner, who was later beheaded by Herod, and they crucified the King. But the forerunner and the King fulfilled prophecy in respect to the office of each in every detail. The forerunner was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The King was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, a son of David born of a virgin, in Bethlehem of Judea, He came out of Egypt, and was called a Nazarene. At His birth He was proclaimed, ‘King of the Jews’ (**Matt. 2:2**). In His public ministry He took the message of a King (**Matt. 21:5**). And He died under the accusation, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (**Matt. 27:29-38**). The crown of thorns had no significance in relation to His sacrificial death for sin. It was the emblem of the nation’s derision for His kingship claim. They thus fulfilled by act the very prophecy the King had made: ‘We will not have this man to rule over us.’ **There should be no confusion at this point. The rulers of the nation who demanded His death were not personally rejecting a Savior, as sinners are rejecting Him now; they were rejecting their King. They did not say, ‘We will not believe on the Savior to the salvation of our souls’; they said, ‘We have no King but Caesar.’**

The rejection of the King was according to the ‘determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God’ (**Acts 2:23**); for His rejection and humiliation were foreshadowed in the types and foreseen in the prophecies of the Old Testament; He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ **At every step in the record, His rejection and death are said to be the fulfilling of the Scriptures. It is recorded of Him in sixteen passages that He, by His rejection and death, fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. It is also recorded of Him in nine passages that He was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the King.**

The first ministry of Christ was, then to Israel as her King. In this He appeared; not as a personal Savior, but as her long expected Messiah; not as a Lamb, but as a Lion; not as a sacrifice by which a Church—the spotless Bride—might be purchased to Himself from among all nations, but as the Son of David, with every right to David’s throne, over Israel, at Jerusalem, in the land of promise. In the Synoptic Gospels, there is therefore, no record of any step toward the formation of the Church or any reference to that great purpose, until, from His own nation, His rejection as King is evident. According to the Synoptic Gospels, the early teachings of the King were of that nation, and were in no wise related to the great results which would afterwards be accomplished through His death and resurrection in the calling out of His Church from all the nations of the earth. Upon His rejection, He began to speak, in anticipation of His death, of the formation of His Church and of His coming back again to the earth. He likewise related the sure fulfillment of every covenant with Israel to the time of His return.

Was, then, the Gospel of the kingdom, as announced by John, by Christ, and by His disciples, a bonafide message to Israel? Did it really mean what it announced? Was Israel’s long predicted purpose of redemption as they were to be accomplished through His death? These questions are insistently asked today; but the answer is not difficult.

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The Gospel of the Kingdom was a bonafide message to Israel. To treat it otherwise, is to accuse God of trickery and deception. It is likewise serious misrepresentation of all the related Scriptures to apply the message and teaching of the King to the present purposes of God in the Age of Grace.

All confusion which arises concerning the Kingdom message in its relation to the cross arises from the failure to recognize the important distinction between the divine viewpoint and the human viewpoint. It is only another application of the rationalistic trick of playing the free will of man against the sovereignty of God. On the human side, there was a clear-cut issue with unrestrained power to choose, or reject, the King. On the divine side, there was a genuine offer of the Kingdom in the Person, presence and ministry of the King; but back of this was the foreknowledge of God which was absolute as to the choice they would make. Their choice would be but the outworking of the eternal purpose of God in Christ, and for that choice they would be held guilty. On the divine side, it is said: 'Therefore they could not believe' (**John 12:39**), and on the human side it is said: 'They hated me without cause' (**John 15:25**)..." (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace, The Glorious Theme*, pp. 132-135).

We must not ever confound the Kingdom offer to Israel with the salvation offer to us. We must not ever confuse the teachings of law and Kingdom and grace, or we will be very confused. Although there may be some general similarities and applications between the teachings of these systems, we must not ever neglect to realize that there are major differences and distinctions.

QUESTION #18 – Where are the Beatitudes found in **Matthew 5:1-12**?

Perhaps no passage is more helpful in understanding the difference between law, grace and kingdom than Matthew's famous beatitude section.

The beatitudes are a description of a righteous and blessed Jewish person who is about to enter the Kingdom that Jesus Christ has established on earth. The beatitudes are not about the church and they are not about our Grace Age salvation or about us going to heaven. They are specifically about Israel getting into her righteous Kingdom on this earth.

Matthew is a book that specifically is interested in discussing Christ's reign as King of the Jews on the earth (**i.e. Matt. 1:6; 2:2**). The section known as the beatitudes sits in this context.

Before we analyze the beatitudes, there are four facts Grace Age believers need to consider:

- 1) The Grace Age believer is looking for heavenly blessings, not earthly blessings.
- 2) The forerunner John preached to Israel a real message of repentance and Kingdom, not a message of believe and be saved (**Matt. 3:2**).
- 3) The message John preached to Israel was rejected by Israel (**John 1:11**).
- 4) The Kingdom which John offered to Israel, has been postponed temporarily until the Gentile Age of Grace is completed (**Acts 15:13-18**).

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The beatitudes are only to Israel (**Matt. 10:5-7**) and come in direct context of Kingdom righteousness and blessedness for the nation Israel. These teachings were given to Israel long before the message of grace was offered to the world. These teachings were given to Israel with a real physical, earthly Kingdom in view.

Although these beatitudes present us with many wonderful concepts which we may apply, **we must understand that the primary intent of this beatitude instruction is in the context of Jesus Christ presenting Himself as King and presenting the potential of Him establishing His righteous Kingdom to and for Israel.** As Dr. C. I. Scofield said, “Having announced the kingdom of heaven as ‘at hand,’ the King now, in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5-7**), declares to His disciples (**5:1**) the principles of the kingdom.” Dr. Scofield goes on to say, “The beatific character and attitude described by our Lord in **vv. 3-12** are unattainable by self-effort...” (*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, Note Matthew 5:2 & 5:3, p. 997).

What Jesus is actually doing in these beatitudes is discussing the kind of Kingdom righteousness that is blessed and will be seen in the Kingdom, which Israel did not have. **There is an article “the” before every quality, specifically it targets Israel.** When analyzing this Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5-7**) certain points become very clear that have key relevancy to Law and Grace:

- 1) In the Kingdom on earth, the Mosaic Law and an Israelite’s attitude toward the Law is of paramount importance, concerning one’s station in life. **Matt. 5:17, 19**
- 2) In the Kingdom on earth, the righteousness required for Jewish entrance is far superior to any religious righteousness ever taught by her religious leaders. **Matt. 5:20**
- 3) In the Kingdom on earth, a perfect standard of righteousness is required, and since Christ proves all Israelites are sinners, the attainment of that kingdom righteousness is impossible by man’s works. **Matt. 5:48**
- 4) Jesus communicated to Israel that he came to fulfill the O.T. Law (**Matt. 5:17**) and that Kingdom righteousness is determined by thoughts (**Matt. 5:27-28**) and motives for actions (**Matt. 6:1-6**).

When Christ completed this discussion, every Jew should have immediately said to Jesus Christ, we want to go into the blessed Kingdom, but we don’t have the righteousness necessary to get into it; would You please give us the necessary righteousness. But after He was done, the people were just amazed at His teaching (**Matt. 7:23-29**).

Beatitude #1 - Matt. 5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

At the time Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom on this earth, Israel will be completely and totally humbled. She will be poor in spirit, not proud in spirit. It becomes very clear from every Biblical prophecy that deals with this Kingdom theme that this will be literally true (**Is. 3:25-4:3**). Today, Israel is anything but poor in spirit. She boasts of her military power, she boasts of her achievements in business and in the medical field and in the world of finances. Before God gives the Kingdom to Israel, He will humble her and she will be poor in spirit.

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In the Grace Age, humility is not a prerequisite for going to heaven; in fact, it is a developed attribute we develop as a result of the fact that we are already citizens of heaven (**Philip. 2:5, 8; 3:20**).

The connection we have to humility in our salvation is to acknowledge the truth about ourselves, that we are sinners and we don't have the necessary righteousness to go to heaven and that is why we believe on Jesus Christ for our salvation. When the Rapture occurs, God will take every believer to heaven, those who were humble and those who were proud.

However, when it comes to Him establishing His Kingdom on earth for Israel, He will not do it until He has humbled every single Israelite to the point that every Jew will cry to God for deliverance (**Matt. 23:27-29**). We know from Biblical prophecy that only one third of the nation Israel will actually end up poor in spirit and enter the Kingdom on earth (**Ezek. 5:12; Zech. 13:8**).

Beatitude #2 - Matt. 5:4 – “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Just prior to the Kingdom being established by God on earth for Israel, the entire nation will be lamenting and mourning (**Is. 3:26-4:2; Lamentations**). During the Tribulation it will not be a joyous or happy time for anyone in the world. For Israel, it will be a time of horror. Prophecy teaches us that the major focal point of persecution during the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation will be against Israel (**Rev. 12:13-14**). This is why the theme of mourning is often associated with Israel, particularly in anticipation of her coming King and Kingdom (**Is. 35:10; 51:3, 11; 61:2-3; 66:13; Zech. 1:17**). What God will do is bring Israel to the place where she will realize that Jesus Christ is her Messiah and King and Savior. In order for Him to do that, He will have to break the nation down to the point that it mourns and it will be at that moment, when she turns to Christ, that she shall be comforted.

In the Grace Age we do not spend our time mourning, but we are charged to spend our time rejoicing. We are to be people of joy, not people of sorrow (**Gal. 5:22; Philip. 4:4; I Thess. 5:16**). In fact, as we anticipate going to heaven, we want a godly life full of joy (**I John 1:4/2:28**). Just before God establishes the Kingdom for Israel, she will have an existence full of mourning. The reward for the Israelite, who does mourn and realize the sin that has brought this judgment against her, will be that he will be comforted.

Beatitude #3 - Matt. 5:5 - “Blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth.”

The actual Greek word used for “gentle” (πραεις) is one that refers to a mindset that is gentle and meek (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 376). The actual mindset attitude that is predicted that Israel will have nationally in close proximity to her King's return is one of gentleness, humility and meekness (**Ps. 76:8-10; Is. 29:19; Zeph. 2:3**). This was not the mindset that existed when Jesus Christ first spoke these words to Israel. When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom on earth, there will not be any Jew that enters who will be arrogant and proud. Every Jew will have the mindset described right here, for God will have brought them to that mindset.