

On Earth As It Is In Heaven, Pt. 12

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(Based on Brian Mattson's series)

Christ In Paradox With Culture, Pt. 5

How does our heavenly citizenship relate to our earthly life?

We've considered the "New Two-Kingdom" theology's:

Definitional Problems (Not really '2', it's '3'; Church=the redemptive Kingdom)

Argumentative Problems (Evasive on the 'impact on culture'; argument from silence on 'mandate')

Biblical Problems (Limits Christ's extensive Lordship; sees creation as destined for annihilation, equates the Revelation 18 "Babylon" with the common realm))

Today:

Doctrinal Problems

Practical Problems

Doctrinal Problem 1: When N2K theology claims that it's simply being biblical and reformed, it's actually co-opting a very narrow form of theology, and an idiosyncratic one to boot. No rabbit trail, but it's one of the keys to understanding the justification for what they teach. Sounds like "just readin' the Bible here", but there are an awful lot of assumptions being granted in order for it to add up to a common realm.

Interview with Mark Dever, one proponent offered paradoxical statements: We have a proof-text for 'natural law' in Romans 1:19-20: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

But when pressed about the fact that no one *keeps* this natural law, he countered by appealing to the Pauline context of 'how to be right with God', and how we shouldn't look to Romans 1 as a basis for defining how natural law works in society. Doesn't that just bring us back to the main question? And does God *really* have two sets of rules, one for Christians and one for unbelievers?

Doctrinal Problem 2: Where does Jesus teach on the Kingdom? Matthew 5, and Matthew 13.

This is the entire treatment of this passage in DVD's book: "The K of H is like a mustard seed and leaven, which have small beginnings but have exponential growth, and thus the Church has spread from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." That's all, folks.

Yes, the mustard seed speaks of small to large growth, but the leaven speaks of internal permeation and transformation. He just lumps them together, as if they are identical, and moves on. In fact, in Jason Stellman's 180-page book *Dual Citizens: Worship and Life Between the Already and the Not Yet*, he doesn't mention Matt. 13 once!

Matt. 5:16: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Q: If we Christians, living in the common realm, are bound by natural law in that common realm, along with unbelievers, then what "good works" is Jesus talking about that elicit such praise to the Father? It can get you...

Is there an institution that meets all 3 criteria for the common realm that we can use as a test-case?

a) Was initiated at creation b) enjoyed by believers and unbelievers alike, and c) not carried over into heaven?

The *family*. And yet the Bible speaks of it as being a representation of the gospel itself. Children obey 'in the Lord', and the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by his proximity to holiness.

Doctrinal Problem 3: In most N2K literature, the two examples from the OT that are pushed as those to emulate in the Church are the *sojourner* and the *exile*. To be sure, there are aspects of these that are not only true of Israel, but also true of the Church. But there is another model, and that is one of conquerors of the land (now the whole world). Matthew is a “type” of Deuteronomy, where Jesus is the “prophet like me” (Moses), spoken of in Deut. 18:15, and later referenced in Acts 3:22 and 7:37, is presented to us. And like Moses on the mountain receiving the Law, Jesus' ascended a mountain in Matt. 28.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

In Deut. 31 we hear very similar language: vs. 23: “And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you." What are they preparing to do?

Practical Problems.

In the aforementioned interview, Dever, at the end, just dumped this out for the guy to answer from natural law—he said: “Okay, what should the Church's position be on prohibition, slavery, abortion, and same-sex marriage?” The guy basically answered in two ways: One, that the Church, that is, pastors, should teach their congregants what the Bible teaches about these things, and two, that the Church's job is *not* to craft civil legislation on these issues.

What's missing from that response? The Church's prophetic role in society, the very things we're afraid of doing, lest we lose our tax-exempt status!

The interviewee also bristled at the obvious question of the part that 2K theology played in the utter capitulation of the Church to Nazi Germany, but again, when pressed he defended the German Church's policy of 'not allowing a *Reichsbischof* in our Churches, of requiring us kick the Jew out of our Churches”. Well good for them, but what about the rest of the country?

Slavery? In the words of James Henly Thornwell:

“The policy of its existence or nonexistence is a question which exclusively belongs to the state. We have no right, as a church, to enjoin it as a duty or to condemn it as a sin. It would be better, therefore, for the moral power of the Northern section of the church to get entirely quit of the subject. Upon every other hypothesis, it is so clearly a question for the state that the proposition would never for a moment have been doubted had there not been a foregone conclusion in relation to its moral character. Are we not right, in view of all the preceding considerations, in remitting the social, civil, and political problems connected with slavery to the state? Is it not a subject, save in the moral duties which spring from it, which lies beyond the province of the church? Have we any right to make it an element in judging of Christian character?”

This is a model of how the yeast of the gospel works through the whole lump of dough?

Psalm 115

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

2 Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"

3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

4 But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men.

8 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

“The two-kingdoms Calvinists believe that reason can be exercised independently of one's religious convictions, and that the exercise of prudence is unrelated to one's ultimate allegiance. Yet what do we do with the continual efforts of our society to flatten out the legitimate diversity of God's good creation as manifested in a complex human society? How shall we respond to ongoing attempts to legally redefine such central institutions as marriage and family? How should we assess the reduction of the variety of human relationships to marketable commodities? These are matters not simply of prudential judgment governed by pragmatic considerations, but of making an idol of something in God's creation, usually the will of the individual and often under the guise of human rights or personal liberation. Sad to say, following idols of our own making is a malignant tendency that refuses to remain within the confines of "religious" concerns, but affects the whole of life—something well understood by the author of Psalm 115. Two-kingdoms Calvinists are in danger of ignoring this reality, a neglect that comes with serious negative consequences.”

(Paraphrased from David T. Koyzis)