

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND GOOD WORKS

Romans 13:1-10, Introduction

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Introduction: In the Book of Daniel from God revealed dreams and visions, the Roman Empire is described as debased and crude like iron mixed with ceramic clay and as a monstrous beast (cf. Daniel 2 & 7). This Rome is the civil government under which the Apostle Paul lived as a citizen although he was born into a Jewish Pharisee family during the Judean Kingdom of the Herodian dynasty and by the grace of God's salvation was called to be an Apostle in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, but before his conversion to Christ, by his own admission, he was in the kingdom of darkness. So here is someone who lived contemporaneously in three kingdoms (because one cannot live as a member of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light at the same time).

The Apostle Paul's Divinely inspired commentary on the God ordained authority of civil government is surprising, if not shocking; however it should be acknowledged as complementing the teaching and example of Jesus and studied along with the balance of Scripture.

There is a recurring debate about the relationship between Christian believers and God's creation ordinance of secular authorities [secular meaning time-bound, in time and space human history not anti-God, anti-religious, anti-Christian, etc.] from family to national governments as well as questions of responsibilities and duties culturally mandated by the moral law of God. Historically, extreme forms have been constructed and variously implemented with either the secular/civil type authorities under the control of visible church establishments or the visible church establishments under the control of the secular/civil type authorities. [Again, historically, this power struggle is not limited to only Christian societies.]

For Reformed Christian theology the doctrine of the Kingdom of God is at the center of the debate about how Christian believers relate to the secular world as living in one kingdom or two kingdoms, apply the covenant of works and covenant of grace, as citizens of the city of God or city of man, identifying the realm of law and realm of gospel, separating the church and state, engaging social-political activism or spiritual retreat, refining cultural arts or seeking piety through asceticism, etc.

Perhaps the one kingdom or two kingdoms theories propose a false dilemma when considering questions about how Christian believers are to live in the secular world. A better starting place might be with the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the Messianic office of Jesus as Mediator distinguishing two crowns of Creator-God's universal sovereignty and Savior-God's mediatorial kingdom of saving-grace, so as not to be faced with an either or but both and, not one or many, but one and many.

Therefore not galvanizing theoretical elaborations of one or two kingdoms which are mutually exclusive, but recognizing Scriptural revelations about two administrations or stewardships of One King who is Creator and Savior of the world.

A valuable Scripture study offering connection and balance to this perplexing issue of the Christian believer's various involvements with the secular world is the doctrine of good works, cf. Westminster Confession of Faith chapters 16, 19, 20 [compare original 1646 text to American revision OPC 1936], 22[compare revision], 23 [compare revision], 25, 31 [compare revision].

Romans 13:1-7, The Apostle Paul bases his applications about Christian believers' responsibilities under secular civil authorities on the argument from Creator-God's universal sovereignty along with the Moral Law defining good works:

- **Creator-God is the ultimate source and judge of all authority...**
- **The creation ordinance of secular authority is intended for good order, but is not an inviolable institution...**
- **The good works identified and intended by the Moral Law serve not only as an external restraining power but also as an inward conscience witness establishing limited culpability...**

**Romans 12:1-21*, Before addressing the issue of secular civil authorities, the Apostle Paul gives urgent exhortations about how the mediating saving grace of Christ transforms Christian believers in terms of good works according to the will of God (v. 2), regarding morally good things generally identified by all people in the world (v. 17), and about this Christ mediated good effectually overcoming evil (v. 21)...

Romans 13:8-10, The Christian believer has been supernaturally transferred into the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ with a transformed relationship to the Law of God by agape-love and therefore the 2nd Table of the Moral Law [note: Commandments 6-10 are restated, the 5th Commandment previously referenced in application of secular civil authority] is not only universally good in this created world but also is manifest so that like Christ's Kingdom the Church (cf. 12:5, His Body), is in this world (of creation) but not of this world (order) ...

Romans 13:11-14, Therefore Christian believers in this sin-fallen world are not co-redeemers, but a sanctifying power of kingdom-light in spiritual warfare opposing moral darkness confronting all domains of human relationships, e.g. social, cultural, political, etc. and under the many crowns of Christ as Creator and Mediator throughout human history and around the globe there continues to be, sometimes more and sometimes less, demonstrations of good overcoming evil, of gospel light greater than sin darkness, of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord God Almighty and of His Christ!