

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD & Gospel Good-Works:

### The Salvation of Zacchaeus' Family and The Parable of the Minas

St. Luke 19:1-27, G.H. Elliott, Pastor

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**Introduction:** Reading and studying the Bible, we should be impacted by the arrangement and context of Scripture as a part of the Divine inspiration and Providential preservation of the Word of God. An obvious example of arrangement and context is found in the Epistle writings proposing doctrines and then making ethical applications, e.g. the Moral Law of God either by continuing universal accountability from the Covenant of Works to Creator-God (cf. Romans 1:18-3:31//9:1-11:36 for Jews and Gentiles, et al.) or by Christian salvation explaining regeneration through the Covenant of Grace with a new Gospel relationship to the Moral Law of God by Jesus Christ revealing Savior-God (cf. Romans 7:1-8:39//12:1-15:13 [13:1-14, continuing validly of God's creation ordinances in the world including Christian believers ...]). This doctrinal distinction should not be confused as an endorsement of sufficiency for Natural Law Theology because no one is able/enabled to justify themselves and be saved by law-works (cf. Romans 4:1-6:23, et al.).

Perhaps not as obvious is the same connection between arrangement and context in the Gospel narratives. We tend to assume the Gospels are written strictly chronological which is a mistake often overlooking in-text keys to interpretation and meaning.

A telling example is Luke's Gospel 19:1-27, the salvation of rich Zacchaeus' family and the Parable of the Minas (a unit of money), also arranged as episodic in context along with chapter 18, Jesus' shocking warning about the human impossibility of salvation *not* just for rich people, and chapter 19:28ff., Jesus' mock triumphal entry into Jerusalem, not like a worldly victorious king.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD & Gospel Good-Works: The Salvation of Zacchaeus' Family and the Parable of the Minas, St. Luke 19:1-27

Reviewing commentaries and sermons on this passage proved generally disappointing particularly because the arrangement and context were overlooked. The astounding connection between Jesus' salvation visited to Zacchaeus' family and the Parable of the Minas is Jesus expressed purpose to correct mistaken human expectations about the Kingdom of God, cf. v. 11.

#### vv. 1-10, the salvation of rich Zacchaeus' family: Gospel good-works are grace-generous...

- Remember the context of chapter 18:24-27...
- As a chief tax collector of the region, vv. 1-2, Zacchaeus' status was someone powerfully rich → an austere/severe/exacting man collecting/taking what he did not deposit and reaping what he did not sow, cf. v. 21...
- Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus indicates the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit confirmed by Jesus naming and seeking him, vv. 3-6...
- The local people's scorn, v. 7, reflects the sin-fallen world's rejection of Jesus & the gospel of the Kingdom of God, cf. 14...
- Zacchaeus' public testimony, v. 8, reveals grace-generous gospel good-works of repentance and charity/reconciliation in the form of restitution, i.e. *not guilt money*, but also above and beyond any O.T. law regulations...  
"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7, ESV)
- Jesus explains all of this by the Covenant of Grace covering the family as the out-working of saving faith like Abraham, vv. 9-10...

Following the story of Zacchaeus' salvation, Luke arranges Jesus' parable of the Minas (valued as a common day's pay/wage x 100), 19:11-27, here the context is not necessarily chronological but these Scripture accounts are gospel related.

### **vv. 11-27, the Parable of the Minas: Gospel good-works are faith-based ...**

The astounding connection between Jesus' salvation visited to Zacchaeus' family and the Parable of the Minas is Jesus expressed purpose to correct mistaken human expectations about the Kingdom of God, cf. v. 11. So this parable has something important to reveal about the Kingdom of God not being identified with human expectations. [Not about extra-Biblical history of Herod's sons currying Roman favor for their father's kingdom...]

Some of the corrections Jesus gives by this parable challenge money-based interpretations for social agendas of all kinds of human ideologies, e.g. not about redistribution of wealth and power, not about free market economics with investment ventures and risks with rewards or losses . The Kingdom of God is not like this world's systems...

- v. 12, Jesus through His ascension into heaven is likened to the nobleman who went into a far place to receive His kingdom...
- v. 13, Christian believers are symbolized by 10 servants—the Biblical use of the number 10 symbolizes collective Divine purpose, so the 10 servants represent the Church collectively as individuals serving Christ (cf. WCF 25:4)...
- v. 14, The rejection of the chosen heir to be king is a major Messianic theme throughout Scripture also being attested by the immediate context, v. 7//v. 28ff. ...
- v. 15, The promised return of the king in power parallels the promised return of Jesus at the consummation of His Kingdom (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, et al.)...
- vv. 16-19, The king as lord commends and rewards his profitable servants *out of proportion* to their monetary worth, a repeated Gospel of grace theme→
- vv. 20-26, The king as lord reprimands the unprofitable servant by official censure because of his hiding in fear over a dreaded caricature of his lord warning that two of the most unprofitable corruptions to the Christian life of faith are worldly doubt, e.g. self-centered suspicions, being double-minded (cf. James 1:5-8, et al.) and unholy fear...
- v. 27, The lord's order as king to execute those who practiced treason also sets a difference between them and the unprofitable servant Scripturally revealed about the final resurrection and last judgment,

“For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” 1 Cor. 3:9-16

*\*Gospel good-works are grace-generous and faith-based. Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He [God] sent.” (John 6:29) In the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus restates the Moral Law of God in Gospel terms of the Covenant of Grace (cf. Matthew 5ff. et al.). The Apostle Paul proposes the doctrine of gospel good-works as ordained and identified by God for the Christian believer through the Covenant of Grace by a transformed relationship to the Moral law of God ( Ephesians 2:8-10//4:20ff., Revelation 2 & 3, et al.).*

*This is the foundation of the Church, the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the primary good work is the public worship of the Triune God through the mediation of King Jesus and the ethical indwelling of the Holy Spirit with whom is the only possibility of salvation out of which salvation flows gospel good works that are grace-generous and faith-based ...*

