

The Church of the Servant King

Thursday Night Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew

(Thurs_Matthew 6 – The Dangers of Religious Hypocrisy)

In general, the focus of Jesus' instruction in chapters 5-7 is the characteristics of the spiritual walk of the kingdom age believer. A parallel can be found in the fruit of the Spirit that God desires to characterize (or be demonstrated by) the believer of the present age. In chapter 5, Jesus instructed His disciples regarding the superior righteousness that was expected of them – an experiential righteousness rooted in inner transformation. In chapter 6, the principle theme shifts very slightly to the danger of hypocrisy – a situation all too prevalent among the 1st Century A.D. religious, unbelieving Jewish person who was impressed with the approval of other men.

FOCUS UPON PLEASING GOD, NOT MAN (6:1-4)

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. 2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 3 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.
(Matt 6:1-4)

- This passage is not in conflict with Jesus' instruction in 5:14-16 where the motive is that praise might be given to God the Father. Righteous conduct under kingdom norms must be visible for praise to be given to God the Father.
- Those who ignore the warning against improper motivation in this passage will get what they want, but no more, i.e. the praise of men.
- The reference to the sounding of a trumpet has been interpreted by many to refer to the practice of blowing trumpets at the time of the collection of alms. However, there are no Jewish sources to confirm this view. Perhaps a better view is that public fasts were proclaimed by the sounding of trumpets. At these times, prayers for rain were recited in the streets and it was widely believed that alms-giving insured the effectiveness of the fasts and the prayers. (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 164) Regardless, Jesus and His disciples were obviously aware of the ostentatious and hypocritical nature of these acts by the religious crowd whereby the religious leaders sought to affirm in their own minds their acceptance by God as a result of the accolades of the people.

THE MODEL PRAYER (6:5-15 WITH EMPHASIS ON 8B-13)

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. 7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9 "Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.
10 'Your kingdom come
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
11 'Give us this day our daily bread.
12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. (Matt 6:7-15)

- Jesus is obviously not teaching against giving of one's resources or time and He is not teaching against prayer. His focus is upon inner motivation.
- The person who prays more in public than in private would need to take heed to Jesus' words.
- The true Lord's prayer is found in John 17. Matthew 6:8b-13 is a model prayer for Jesus' disciples.
- There are different views regarding this passage; however, I believe that the appropriate view is to realize that this was a prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray during a Kingdom proximate period within the Age of Israel. (This means that this prayer is appropriate during the period that the "gospel of the kingdom" is being proclaimed).
- The disciples had just recently heard Jesus proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom (4:17, 23) and teach principles relating to the mindset and behavior that would characterize those prepared to enter the Kingdom (5:3-10).
- All of Jesus' instruction to the disciples at this point in His ministry was Jewish in orientation. There is not one hint of the present church age – the age of the Body of Christ.
- Even if we allow that certain components of this prayer could be prayed during the present age by a believer who fully understood the underlying dispensational distinctions, there are certain components that make this prayer on the whole to be inappropriate for the present age believer to pray, e.g. "forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors."
- No where in teaching to the Church Age believer is there any instruction that we are forgiven our debts based upon how we forgive our debtors. Rather, the instruction is quite to the contrary. See Ephesians 4:32 – "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."
- Since most who recite this prayer in group settings have no clue as to its relationship to the future messianic kingdom age, then they are effectively promoting an almost mindless recitation out of the desire to demonstrate some type of unity.
- There are certainly aspects of this prayer that can benefit the Church Age believer to understand and for the Church Age believer to long for the coming of the Kingdom to earth with the understanding that the Rapture will precede that Kingdom is not wrong. As a matter of fact, that attitude is commendable.
- Based upon the manner in which events have actually transpired in history, this prayer will be uttered by those in the Tribulation who are subsisting day to day based upon the very real provision of God for their daily sustenance in the face of Satanic attempts to destroy them via the Antichrist.
- Among dispensationalists, there are those who apply the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5-7 to the Church. We will later see that these dispensationalists believe that there is a mystery form of the kingdom that includes the present Church Age and also the Tribulation. They accept a future, literal Kingdom on earth; however, they believe that there is a Kingdom that is present on earth today in mystery form. According to these

- individuals, it does not have the political and socio-economic infrastructure that will characterize the future Millennial Kingdom, nevertheless it is present.
- There are many problems with this view that we will discuss later; however, for the purpose of the present discussion, the biggest problem is that it seems to ignore the possibility (reality) that while the Church Age believer will be a participant in the future Kingdom of Christ, it doesn't mean that there is a literal form of the Kingdom today to which Christ's teaching applies.

FASTING TO BE SEEN ONLY BY GOD (6:16-18)

16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face 18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. (Matt 6:16-18)

Fasting under the Mosaic Law – under the Mosaic Law, fasting was commanded only on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-31; 23:27-32; Num 29:7).

29 "This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; 30 for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 "It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. (Lev 16:29-31)

27 "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. 28 "You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. 29 "If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. 30 "As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. 31 "You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. 32 "It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath." (Lev 23:27-32)

7 'Then on the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall humble yourselves; you shall not do any work. (Num 29:7)

Fasts of remembrance – During the Exile in Babylonian captivity, regular fasts of remembrance were observed on a national basis (Zech 7:3-5; 8:19).

3 Speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, "Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?" 4 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 5 "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?' (Zech 7:3-5)

19 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.' (Zech 8:19)

Voluntary or Elective Fasts – Of course, an individual could fast at any time he so desired. There are numerous examples in both the Old and New Testament where this occurred.

- As an indication of humility before the Lord often in connection with the confession of sins (Neh 9:1-2; Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3, 5; Dan 9:2-20; 10:2-3; Jonah 3:5; Acts 9:9).
- In association with laying some special petition before the Lord (Exod 24:18; Judg 20:26; 2 Sam 1:12; 2 Chron 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23; Esth 4:16; Matt 4:1-2; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23).
- A Christian in the current age or dispensation can fast if he so desires (1 Cor 9:24-27 cf. Phil 3:19; 1 Peter 4:3).

OT prophets criticize hypocrisy in fasting – Even in the OT, prophets criticized the hypocritical and merely formal practice of fasting (Isa 58:3-7; Jer 14:12; Zech 7:5-6). In Jesus' day, the Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12). Anna, a devout Jew, fasted often (Lu 2:37).

What did Jesus teach about fasting? Jesus did not ban fasting, rather He provides some guidelines for the disciples to follow when they fasted. The religious crowd would go without washing and other normal hygiene, sprinkle ashes on their heads, and omit the normal use of oil (cf. 2 Sam 14:2; Dan 10:3). Jesus taught His disciples to avoid drawing attention to oneself in any way when fasting.

In the Pauline epistles, we find similar governing guidance for believers of the Church Age. See Colossians 2:20-23.

LOYALTY TO KINGDOM VALUES (MATT 6:19-34)

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. 25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt 6:19-34)

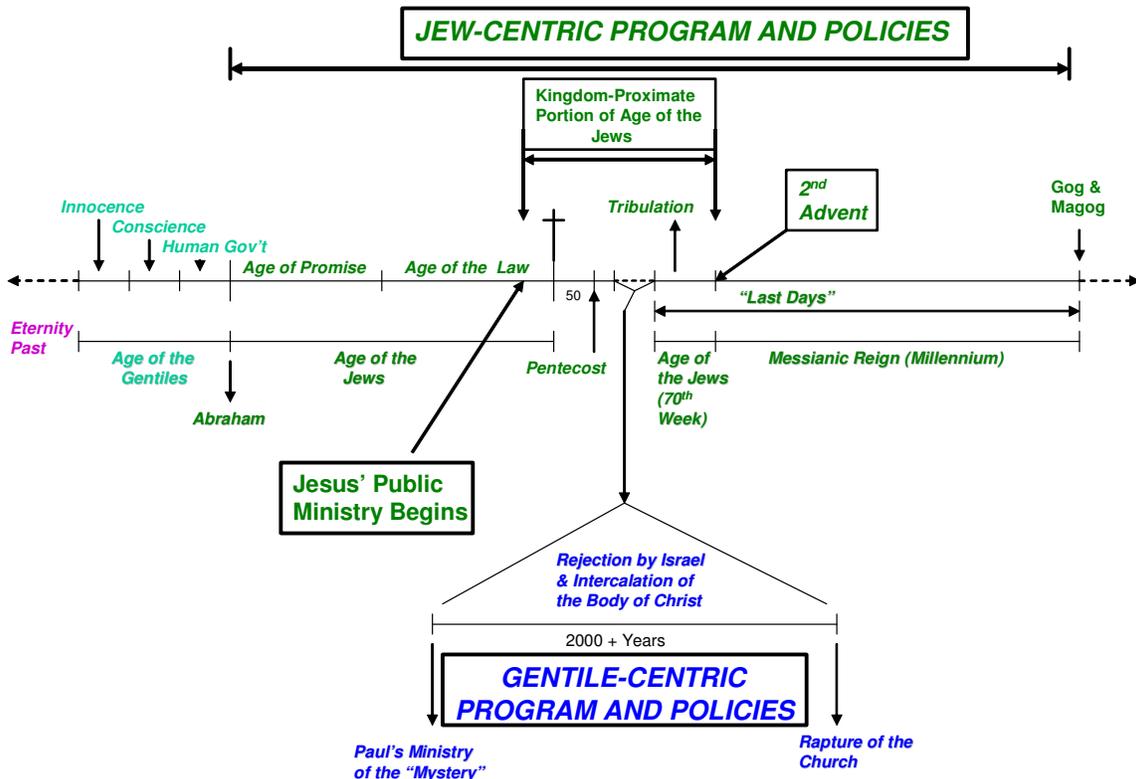
In this section of Scripture, we see four blocks of instruction from Jesus to His disciples in which He provides the disciples with different metaphors for loyalty to kingdom values. The instruction concerning loyalty to kingdom values is illustrated by: 1) the treasure of one's heart

(6:19-21); 2) the focus of one's attention or the momentum of one's life (6:22-23); 3) one's choice of masters in life (6:24); and 4) the object of one's trust (6:25-34).

The religious leaders of Jesus' day believed that the Lord materially blessed those He loved, therefore material wealth and prosperity was an indication of spiritual approval. This faulty belief system led to a worldly focus characterized by such things as building up treasures on earth, self-centeredness, spiritual blindness, slavery to the world, and worry when, as most often was the case, one's life was not being blessed in a manner consistent with a life of blessing from the Lord. People's identity was rooted in things of this world rather than in God's purpose and design for a believer of that age or dispensation.

Jesus was teaching a new paradigm of thinking and of relating to God and others. His generation missed the strategic, evangelistic and panoramic purpose of God for the nation Israel and the chosen or elect people, the Jews. Had they understood God's purpose for the nation and the Jews, they would have understood that any material prosperity bestowed upon the nation and its people was due to God's desire to draw Gentiles to Himself through Israel and the Jews.

In the present dispensation, there is no correlation between material wealth and physical health and God's program for believers. God's concept of missions in the age of Israel (more specifically the age of the Law) was primarily *centripetal* in nature, i.e. unbelievers were to be drawn to God based upon the manner in which God blessed His spiritual people. This principle is the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:3 and is found as a theme throughout the Old Testament (Ex 9:15-16; 15:3, 7, 15; 32:1-14; 1 Ki 8:41-43; 10:1, 7-9, 24).



In the kingdom-proximate portion of the Age of Israel, the concept of missions seems to shift to a more *centrifugal* orientation, i.e. unbelievers are evangelized as believers go throughout the world consistent with the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8).

What better way to attract the Gentiles to the God of Israel than through God's observable blessings upon His people. They did not deserve those blessings and had they been oriented to grace and had they internalized God's grace as Truth, then their lives would have reflected it. Instead, because they had internalized old man thinking, they were self-righteous in their self-consciousness (their self-identity) and their conscience was built upon an old-man belief system with false norms and standards – norms and standards that allowed them to despise the poor and diseased without remorse.

Examples of the passages that they probably distorted in meaning would include Job 1:1-3, 8; 42:12-17 and Proverbs 13:4.

1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. 2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. (Job 1:1-3)

8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." (Job 1:8)

12 The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. 17 And Job died, an old man and full of days. (Job 42:12-17)

4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat. (Prov 13:4)

➤ ***Lay Up Treasures in Heaven (6:19-21)***

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Greek construction of verse 19 would be better translated "stop storing up treasures" instead of "do not store up." This is important because it serves as an indication that the time for a decisive break had come with Jesus' offer of the gospel of the kingdom. Also, Jesus is not indicating that wealth in itself is an evil (see Lu 14:12; John 4:21; 1 Peter 3:3-4). Rather, He is concerned about selfishness and misplaced values.

The point of Jesus' instruction is that those things most highly treasured occupy one's heart. In Jesus' day, God desired that kingdom norms be the treasure of one's heart (see 5:20, 38-42). Today, we have similar truth (Col 3:1-2) and the production of the fruit of the Spirit is that which God desires (Gal 5:22-26) in our lives.

➤ ***The Focus of One's Attention and Momentum in Life (6:22-23)***

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

In these two verses, Jesus is not focusing upon the physical eye and what one sees through the physical eye. Rather, Jesus is focusing upon one's spiritual focus or perspicacity. The momentum and direction of one's life provides the pivot point from which one can chart his course in any number of directions. Jesus' point is that unless one has the correct spiritual focus, then to that extent one is spiritually blind. The eye to which Jesus refers is equivalent to the heart or mind of man. The heart set on God so as to hold to His laws was what God desired of the Jew (Psa 119:18, 148 cf. 119:36-37). In verse 23, the phrase "the light that is in you" refers to the vision that the eye with divided loyalties provides, i.e. the attitude characterized by self-centeredness results in spiritual darkness and confusion regarding spiritual realities. The same principle is found in Church Age epistles (Eph 4:17-24; 5:8-14).

➤ ***Slavery: Two Choices (6:24)***

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

In this verse, Jesus explains that behind the choice between two treasures (that which is valued and prioritized) and two visions (where the eyes are fixed and the course set in life) there is another basic choice regarding who or what to serve. The Greek word mammon is really a transliteration of an Aramaic word that meant wealth or property. The root in both Aramaic and Hebrew indicated that in which one had confidence. Paul acknowledges this principle in the Church Age when he states that he is a bondservant of Christ (Gal 3:10). See also Romans 6:22 and 1 Corinthians 7:23.

➤ ***The Result: In What Do You Trust (6:25-34)***

25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

In context, Jesus is making the point that the Jews did not need to focus their entire existence upon the physical necessities (let alone the luxuries implied) of life. He is not trying to promote a neglectful attitude toward one's responsibilities and promote carelessness, apathy, or laziness in life. This is the principle that He states in verse 25. He then follows the general rule with specific examples in verses 26-30.

In verses 26-27, Jesus uses the example of the birds of the air to teach about the Lord's provision of life and food. In verses 28-30, Jesus uses the example of the lilies of the field to teach about God's provision for the body with clothes. He then summarizes the principle from the two examples in verses 31-32. The principle was that the root of anxiety is unbelief. Similar teaching is given to the Church Age believer in Philipians 4:6.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Phil 4:6)

In verses 33-34, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. The disciples (and Jewish and Gentile believers) who desired to enter the Kingdom needed to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness first.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

In recent times, a radical theology has arisen that is more focused upon the worldly condition of man than it is focused upon his spiritual and eternal status. In fact, it is not that it is so new. Rather, it is just one of Satan's many adaptations to different cultures with a form of religion that denies the power of God (2 Tim 3:5). This theology is known as liberation theology and has arisen in an attempt to address the horrible situation in which the masses of Latin America find themselves. It is humanistic and ignores the spiritual view of the situation from the view of an omnipotent, omniscient, and a sovereign God. It is focused on the horizontal plane almost exclusively and the divinity developed in liberation theology is the divinity to be found in all mankind. Through social revolution, peaceful or violent, man is to attack injustice, establish a new society, and become a new man.

- Origins – It began with some of the youth movements of the '40's and '50's and was formalized by Richard Schaul, a missionary in 1955. The liberation motif appeared with increasing frequency in a number of progressive Roman Catholic councils and ecumenical conferences in the '60's. It gained widespread recognition and acceptance at the second Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM II) in Medell'n, Columbia in 1968.
- Liberation Theology seeks to solve the problems of social injustice, inequality, insecurity, and iniquity through social revolution, peaceful or violent.
- Liberation Theology is deeply indebted to Marxism for much of the theory embedded in its approach. (Poverty is a result of a class society, they believe, and people are poor because others are rich. Capitalism is the culprit).
- Biblical exegesis is seen as an exegesis of the dominant class.
- There is a strong element of utopianism. It is amillennial in orientation and desires to establish the kingdom of God on earth apart from divine intervention.
- The focus is on social sin rather than personal sin.

The bottom line is that LT is just one of many manifestations throughout history of Satan's deception of man through religion and its shift in focus away from the spiritual life found in Christ and toward the temporal problems in the world solved through human good and lifting man to divine status apart from the work of Christ (see Gen 3:4).