

Grace versus Procurement

Jesus did much preaching about the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God and directed his disciples to do the same. This gospel was without any mention of any favor or forgiveness to be obtained through his death, vicarious atonement, or resurrection. Verses referencing this are found in: Matthew 4:23, 10:7, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 11:17-21, Luke 4:43, Luke 8:1, and Luke 9:2.

It was simply good news to the effect that:

1. God was any man's Father.
2. The Kingdom of God was here and now and not for some forthcoming generation exclusively.
3. Your Father will provide everything needful. As children of God one need not worry about everyday provisioning. It resulted from God's grace (unmerited favor) and was an entitlement unrelated to any works, appropriation, or procurement. It came with being a child of the Father.
4. God's grace is distributed without regard of the qualifications of the recipient.
5. Your forgiveness was to be obtained as the aftermath of your forgiveness of others.
6. Knowing God, the heavenly Father resulted in eternal life without any forthcoming condemnation.
7. God Himself is our only savior.

These 7 things constituted the gospel or good news of the kingdom which Jesus and his disciples preached.

A closer examination of these 7 aspects of the good news of the kingdom of God are reviewed below along with references:

1. God was any man's Father

Jesus preached the matter of praying "Our Father which art in heaven" to the multitudes, not just as unique instructions allowable only to his disciples. Matthew 6:9

The following was also said to the multitudes attending his preaching as well as to the disciples who were at hand: "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." Matthew 23:9

2. The kingdom of God is here and now.

When Jesus read from Esaias he concluded "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:17-21

"...And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 10:7

He said: "...for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21 The NASB version uses the translation, "in your midst".

3. Your Father will provide everything needful.

In numerous verses Jesus points out that one should not concern themselves with an adequacy of provision for food, clothing, water, etc. He dutifully points out how as parents we do not give stones when bread has been asked for, or serpents when fish is requested and challenged the listener to consider how much more careful the Father was with His children:

Matthew 6:25-34, 7:7-11, 10:29-31, Luke 11:11-13, 12:6-7, 24:27-32, 12:22-24

4. God's Grace is distributed without qualifiers.

Being the beneficiary of God's grace is without reference to whether or not you are good or evil, just or unjust. Grace is "unmerited" favor. Matthew 5:44-45

Jesus even pointed out that an attribute of the Father was that "he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil." Luke 6:35

5. Your forgiveness was to be obtained as the aftermath of yourself forgiving others.

“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Matthew 6:12

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Matthew 7:1-2

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive and ye shall be forgiven.” Luke 6:37

6. Knowing God, the heavenly Father resulted in eternal life without any forthcoming condemnation.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24

“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.” John 12:44

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.” John 17:3

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” John 17:4

7. God Himself is our savior and beside Him there is no other.

“Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shall know no God but me: for there is no savior beside me.” Hosea 13:4

In examining the 7 factors considered above one realizes that it is actually quite simple. One was to love God and benefit from His grace. It is no wonder that Jesus emphasized the importance that we are to become as little children:

“and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:4

Jesus remained true to his mission. When before Pilate he said:

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” John 18:37 This seems to be put forward most succinctly. Jesus flatly states that the reason for his birth, and the reason for him being born was simply “to bear witness unto the truth.”

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:17

In the verses given above, it shows that the good news of the kingdom was that the grace and mercy of God was upon everyone. As one moved into an acceptance of their role in the Father/child relationship they were to judge not and forgive, but otherwise, just know the Father and live in peace with Him and with all men. One was to return to simple childlike trust and faith. In none of this is procurement of God’s blessings a factor.

Elsewhere in the New Testament it is stated that Jesus played an important role in satisfying the demands of the law, becoming a vicarious atonement, etc. These teachings get somewhat away from the simple grace of God for it enters the area of grace now being procured or purchased by the performance of a 3rd party. Grace which is procured or purchased with a price, ceases to be grace in the purest sense. Such doctrine becomes a works and procurement procedure rather than the simple grace of God espoused by Jesus in his messages about the good news of the kingdom of God. All of this is belabored at length in the epistles attributed to Paul, but the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached mostly minimized Jesus’s importance apart from being a messenger.

Becoming as a little child, trusting God, relying on His grace, and just getting on with your life is enjoyable. In this mode of living there is no score keeping of one's accomplishments or lack of them. There is simply a happy trust in the unmerited favor or grace of God.

In the spirit of becoming as a little child in the kingdom of God, it works for me to simply start each day praying, "Good morning Father. Thank you for this day replete with your grace and provisioning."

Then like a little child, I dismiss from my mind the correctness of my relationship with God and live the entire day fully expecting to benefit from God's grace and Him providing me with whatsoever is needful. I feel no need to add another word for that little prayer says its all. Oh, no doubt I will make some effort to live correctly and extend mercy here and there, but I have ceased to get all up tight about it. After all, I am a child.

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