

## Dead Church Podcast Notes

### Acts Initiative

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### **Ep. 10 – Lies Christians Believe About The Kingdom of God**

As we've seen, the radical lifestyle seen in Acts 2 and 4 was taught by the apostles from the very beginning. It is what real love is. It's what it means to obey God. It's what it means to be a Christian.

It's more than just doing nice things, being kind, feeling affection, or trying to be a good person. It's more than just giving what's left over after you look out for yourself.

Real love, as taught by the apostles, is when you sell your possessions, you give to those in need, you live in equality with one another, no one has more than they need and no one has less than they need. Real love is when you stop looking out for yourself, you give up your own comfort, you give up the nice things you have and enjoy, and you use those resources to help others. Real love is when you follow the example set by Jesus.

Real love is when you begin to live in a type of "holy communism." It's what we see in the early Church – everyone shared everything, no one was in any need, no one lived in excess, no one thought of their possessions as their own, and everyone looked out for one another rather than themselves.

Real love is a love where you are genuinely and completely more concerned about what's good for those around you than you are about what's good for yourself. It's a love where you don't do what's best for you, and you don't do what you would prefer – you make all of your decisions entirely around what is best for other brothers and sisters. Your life is consumed with them – not yourself. You make your decisions around them – not yourself. You spend your resources on them – not yourself. You prioritize them – not yourself.

Paul said, "Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised from the dead."<sup>1</sup>

He also said, "He gave himself for us so he might ransom us from all wickedness and to make us pure people who belong only to him – people who are always wanting to do good deeds."<sup>2</sup>

And Peter said, "Christ bore our sins in his body on the tree so we would stop living for sin and start living for righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' death was not just about us going to heaven someday. He died so that we would be changed right now – in this life. He died so that we would no longer live for ourselves right now – in this life. His death and resurrection were about us being set free and changed today.

That means we don't make our plans based on what's good for ourselves, we don't use our resources to improve our own lives, and we don't waste our time and energy on doing what we would enjoy. We completely stop looking out for our own interests, and we start to look out for the interests of others.

Jesus gave us a command to love one another as he loved us.<sup>4</sup> That means we're supposed to

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15

<sup>2</sup> Titus 2:14

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 2:24

<sup>4</sup> Ref. John 13:34, 15:12

love one another with the same kind of love that Jesus showed for us. His love was a radical love. It was a costly love. It was a love that gave up everything and held nothing back. It was a love that chose to stop being rich and comfortable, and instead become poor so that those who were poor could become rich and comfortable.

Paul said, “You know the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor so that by his becoming poor you might become rich.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus set an example for us to follow. He demonstrated what true love is.

But Jesus did more than just set this as an example.

Jesus taught what this love looks like. He taught people how they should live.

Often, Christians read what Jesus taught, and they miss the whole point. They miss what he taught because they read it through the lens of what men have told us that Jesus said. Men have told us that we just need to believe. Men have told us that we don’t need to have action. Men have told us that Jesus taught that all we have to do is have faith – not that we need to obey.

But Jesus didn’t only teach that we must have faith. Jesus taught action. Jesus had a strong emphasis on the fact that we are supposed to be doing what he taught us to do.

He said, “Not all those who say to me ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. On the last day many people will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and did many mighty works in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who practice lawlessness.’ Everyone who hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house. But it did not collapse, because it was built on rock. Everyone who hears my words and does not obey them is like a stupid man who built his house on sand. It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and it collapsed with a big crash.”<sup>6</sup>

“My true brother and sister and mother are those who do what my Father in heaven wants.”<sup>7</sup>

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but do not do what I say?”<sup>8</sup>

“...blessed are those who hear the teaching of God and obey it.”<sup>9</sup>

“Those who believe in the Son have eternal life, but those who do not obey the Son will never have life. God’s wrath stays on them.”<sup>10</sup>

“If you love me, you will obey my commands.”<sup>11</sup>

“Those who have my commands and obey them are the ones who love me...”<sup>12</sup>

“If people love me, they will obey my teaching.”<sup>13</sup>

“...if you obey my commands, you will abide in my love.”<sup>14</sup>

These are just a few examples. Jesus clearly taught that we are required to obey him and do what he taught.

Christians typically read these verses and think, “well yeah – we’re supposed to obey Jesus...”

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 7:21-27

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 12:50

<sup>8</sup> Luke 6:46

<sup>9</sup> Luke 11:28

<sup>10</sup> John 3:36

<sup>11</sup> John 14:15

<sup>12</sup> John 14:21

<sup>13</sup> John 14:23

<sup>14</sup> John 15:10

And Jesus taught us to believe in him. So, if we believe, then we're obeying his teaching."

But, as we've seen earlier in this series, the word *believe* and the word *faith* in Ancient Greek meant more than how most Christians think of it today. It meant you believed *and* obeyed. It meant you were loyal, you were faithful, you had fidelity. It meant you were reliable and trustworthy. In fact, the exact same word that is often translated *believe* is also often translated *obey*.

When Jesus said we need to obey him, he was not saying, "you need to obey my commands, and my commands are for you to believe in me." No – that wouldn't make any sense because, in Greek, that would be the equivalent of him saying, "you need to obey me, and my commands are for you to obey me." In the Greek, it's the same thing!

When Jesus said we need to obey him, he was talking about something else. He was talking about action. He was talking about lifestyle. Throughout all four gospel accounts, his commands were all practical things he wants us to be doing. Those commands are what we must obey.

As we saw in the last video, Jesus told the apostles to teach everyone else to obey what he had taught them. So that's what they did. They taught others what Jesus had taught them. And what they taught was a radical kind of love. They taught people to stop looking out for their own interests. They taught people to stop accumulating wealth and possessions for themselves. They taught people to share everything in common. They taught people to give to the poor and needy among them. They taught people to live in equality with one another and not hold onto more than what is needed.

The early Church adopted a form of "holy communism." They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They shared everything in common. They sold their possessions and gave to those in need. No one had more than they needed to live, and as a result, no one had less than they needed to live.

There was total equality within the Church. Everyone was more concerned about the needs of others than they were about having the nice things this world offers. Everyone was willing to live at a lesser standard of living so that everyone within the Church would have the basic essentials for life.

They sold their homes. They sold their fields. They sold their possessions. They sold their excess. They took that money and distributed it to those who had needs. They didn't hold back. They didn't hesitate.

The apostles taught people these things because that's what Jesus had taught them. Jesus taught his disciples to live in radical love. Everywhere Jesus went, he instructed those who followed him to live in love – to sell their possessions, share with those in need, and stop accumulating wealth and comfort for themselves. All four gospel accounts are filled with these instructions. Jesus taught people what true love is – and this teaching was an integral part of his mission.

In order to really understand what Jesus taught, it's important to recognize more of the big picture of what Jesus came to do.

So, let's take a step back to see the context of Jesus' ministry...

Jesus came at a time when the Jewish people were anticipating the arrival of God's Kingdom. They expected the Messiah to come. They anticipated the time when God would set them free from being ruled by Gentile nations (such as Rome) and would restore the Kingdom of Israel to them forever.

When Jesus came, he announced to the Jewish people, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News!"<sup>15</sup>

The Good News Jesus preached was that the Kingdom was at hand. That phrase, "at hand" meant it was near – it was arriving. The prophets had all prophesied that the day would come when

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<sup>15</sup> Mark 1:15

God would restore his Kingdom, it would be ruled by a descendant of David, and it would never be destroyed again.<sup>16</sup> Jesus announced that the time had come – the Kingdom of God, promised by God through the prophets, had finally arrived.

This is the Good News Jesus proclaimed. This is the Good News his disciples preached.<sup>17</sup>

Matthew wrote, “Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, *proclaiming the Good News about the kingdom...*”<sup>18</sup>

Luke recorded, “Jesus called the Twelve together... He sent them out to *proclaim God’s kingdom* and to heal the sick... So the apostles went out and traveled from town to town, *proclaiming the Good News* and healing people everywhere.”<sup>19</sup>

So, the Good News (or Gospel) that Jesus and the apostles all preached was that God’s Kingdom had arrived. The time had finally come to fulfill what the prophets had promised. God was going to gather his people together again and make them one nation, belonging only to him.

John recorded that Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied about Jesus without even realizing it. Caiaphas had said, “it is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”<sup>20</sup> And John explained, “Caiaphas did not say this from himself. As high priest that year, he was really prophesying that Jesus would die for their nation and for God’s scattered children to bring them all together and make them one.”<sup>21</sup>

This is exactly what the prophets had foretold. God was going to gather the scattered people of Israel together and make them one. He would re-establish his Kingdom.

In the Old Testament, the Kingdom of God was the Kingdom of Israel. It was a nation that belonged only to God. It was a nation of people God had chosen for himself.

Jesus was saying the time had come for God to re-establish his nation for himself. He was re-establishing the nation of Israel, and Jesus would be the King, which is why he was often referred to as “the King of the Jews” and “the King of Israel.”<sup>22</sup>

But Jesus clarified that things would be slightly different than they had been before. Though he was re-establishing the kingdom of God, it wouldn’t be quite the same as it had been before Babylon.

He said, “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it belonged to this world, my servants would have fought to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But my kingdom is from another place.”<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the original nation of Israel, which was a real, physical kingdom, Jesus established a kingdom that doesn’t belong to this world. It is a kingdom from another place – outside of this world.

He also said, “God’s kingdom is coming, but not in a way that you will be able to see with your eyes. People will not say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ because God’s kingdom is within you.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ref. Isaiah 31:5-9, 32:1-5, 35:4-10, 42:13-17, 43:1-7, 44:1-8, 49:1-26, 60:1-22, 61:1-11, 62:1-12; Jeremiah 30:8-24; Ezekiel 17:22-24, 20:34-44, 21:25-27, 28:25-26, 36:33-36, 37:1-28; Daniel 2:31-45; Hosea 1:10-11, 2:14-23, 3:4-5, 6:11-7:1, 11:10-11, 14:4-9; Amos 9:8-15; Micah 4:1-13, 7:11-13; Zephaniah 3:8-20; Zechariah 1:16-17, 2:10-13, 8:3-15, 8:22-23, 9:8-17, 10:3-12

<sup>17</sup> Ref. Matthew 4:17, 4:23, 9:35, 13:18-19, 24:14; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43, 8:1, 9:2, 9:6, 16:16; Acts 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:31

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 9:35, emphasis added

<sup>19</sup> Luke 9:1-2,6, emphasis added

<sup>20</sup> John 11:50

<sup>21</sup> John 11:51-52

<sup>22</sup> Ref. Matthew 21:5, 27:29, 27:37, 27:42; Mark 15:2, 15:12, 15:17-18, 15:26; Luke 1:30-33, 19:38, 23:1-3, 23:36-38; John 1:49, 12:13-15, 18:33-37, 19:12-16, 19:19-22

<sup>23</sup> John 18:36

<sup>24</sup> Luke 17:20-21

The Jews expected the physical nation of Israel to be recreated. They anticipated a physical nation in this world. They expected a physical king to rule from the earthly Jerusalem.

But Jesus came with a different kind of kingdom. It isn't seen with the eyes, and it doesn't belong to this world. It is a spiritual kingdom, ruled by Jesus, who is seated at the right hand of God in heaven. Its capital city is not the earthly Jerusalem – it's the heavenly Jerusalem – the city planned and built by God.<sup>25</sup>

So here's what we must realize:

The Kingdom of God existed in the Old Testament. It was the nation of Israel. They were God's people, and they had God's Law. They were different than all the other nations of the world because they obeyed God's Law and lived the kind of life that God considers to be right.

After they broke God's Law and turned away from him, God promised them that he would one day make a new covenant with them and re-establish them as his nation again.

But this time, instead of giving them written laws they needed to follow, God promised them, "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts."<sup>26</sup>

God wouldn't get rid of the Law. He would give the Law to his people in a new way. He would write it on their hearts. He would turn them into people who want to do what God wants – rather than people who merely try to follow all the rules.

This promise was fulfilled through the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> As Paul said, "[Jesus] gave himself for us so he might ransom us from all wickedness and to make us pure people who belong only to him – people who are always wanting to do good deeds."<sup>28</sup> Paul also said, "The whole law is summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself...'" So I tell you: Walk by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your flesh wants."<sup>29</sup>

Jesus established a Kingdom of people who have God's Law written on their hearts. They now *want* to do good deeds. They now *want* to live for him. They no longer live for themselves. They live for him.<sup>30</sup> They walk by the Spirit, living in love, and therefore they live a life that fulfills the entire Law of Moses.

Paul said, "...always owe love to each other, because the person who loves others has fulfilled all the law. For the law says, 'You must not be guilty of adultery. You must not murder anyone. You must not steal. You must not want to take your neighbor's things.' All these commands and all others are really summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' Love never hurts a neighbor, so loving is fulfilling the law."<sup>31</sup>

Christians today have this misconception that Jesus did away with the Law of Moses. They miss the point of what Paul meant when he said we're no longer under the Law. Paul wasn't saying we no longer need to obey God. He was saying we no longer need to force ourselves to obey God by following a huge list of rules. God's Law is written on our hearts. We follow God by walking with the Spirit. We follow the Law because we naturally want to do what it taught. We are now people who want to obey God and do what is right. We obey the Law by walking with the Spirit – living in love, doing good deeds, and living for Jesus instead of ourselves.

Jesus didn't do away with the Law. In fact, he said the opposite:

"Don't think that I have come to do away with the law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and

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<sup>25</sup> Ref. Hebrews 11:10, 11:15-16, 12:18-28

<sup>26</sup> Jeremiah 31:33

<sup>27</sup> Ref. Hebrews 8-10

<sup>28</sup> Titus 2:14

<sup>29</sup> Galatians 6:14,16

<sup>30</sup> Ref. 2 Corinthians 5:15

<sup>31</sup> Romans 13:8-10

earth pass away, not even the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass away until everything is accomplished. Whoever ignores one of the least of these commands and teaches other people to do likewise will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys the commands and teaches other people to obey them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>32</sup>

Jesus didn't do away with the Law. He still fully expects us to obey the Law. But now the Law is written on our hearts. Now we obey the Law by following the Spirit. It's not about following a list of rules, and it's not about doing things that we don't understand.

Shortly after saying this, Jesus also said, “Do to others what you want them to do to you. This sums up the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets.”<sup>33</sup>

The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets all had a *point*. That point is love. The point is that we should do to others what we want them to do to us. That's the point of all the Law and all that the prophets wrote.

The Pharisees (and many Christians today) would follow some of the rules in the Bible, but they would miss the actual point of what the Bible said. They would turn God's Law into religion rather than understanding what God actually cares about.

Jesus didn't come to do away with the Law. He came to write the Law on our hearts. So now, by following the Spirit, we can live a life where we obey the *point* of the Law, and we're not just blindly obeying rules without any understanding. Furthermore, by writing the Law on our hearts, he makes us into people who naturally want to do what the Law really taught all along.

The Law of God has not changed. The Law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets were all summed up in love. And Jesus said his command is also to love one another. Those who live in true biblical love are really obeying all the Law and the prophets.

So, here's my point:

When we look at what Jesus taught, we need to recognize that he taught the same thing that was taught all throughout the Old Testament. The Kingdom of God has the same Law. Nothing has changed about what our lives should look like.

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of people who live their lives doing what God wants.

The New Testament Kingdom of God is the fulfillment of what God always intended the nation of Israel to be. Jesus and the apostles taught the people to live the kind of life that God always wanted the Israelites to live. They taught the people to become a kingdom of people who walk according to God's Law.

Their instructions were nothing new.

They were re-establishing the Kingdom of God. They were re-establishing the nation of Israel. God's Law didn't change. God hasn't changed how he wants us to live. He still wants us to be a kingdom of people who live in a way that God considers to be right (or, righteous).

What Jesus taught was the same thing Moses and the prophets had all already taught.

Let's look at some examples:

The Law of Moses said:

“But there should be no needy people among you, because the LORD your God will richly bless you in the land he is giving you as your own. He will bless you if you obey the LORD your God completely, but you must be careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today.”<sup>34</sup>

So, in the Law of Moses, God told the people that if they were careful to obey him, they would

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew 5:17-19

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 7:12

<sup>34</sup> Deuteronomy 15:4-5

be a nation with absolutely no needy people among them whatsoever.

That's what God always wanted his kingdom to be. He wanted a kingdom of people who had no needy people. He wanted everyone to be taken care of. He wanted everyone's needs to be met.

In the book of Acts, we read, "The group of believers were united in their hearts and spirit. No one said any of their possessions was their own. In fact, everything was held in common... *There were no needy people among them.* Because from time to time those who owned fields or houses sold them, brought the money from the sale, and gave it to the apostles. Then the money was distributed to anyone who needed it."<sup>35</sup>

So, Moses said, "there should be no needy people among you..." and then Acts said, "there were no needy people among them."

There were no needy people in the early Church because the early Church fulfilled the Law of Moses. The Kingdom of God is not supposed to have any needy people. If there are needy people in the Church today (which there are many), then the Church today is not fulfilling the Law of Moses, which means they're not living in true biblical love – because true biblical love fulfills all of the Law and all of the prophets!<sup>36</sup>

God wants a nation without any needs whatsoever. That was always his intention. In the book of Acts, when the Church fully obeyed what Jesus had taught, they were a kingdom of people without any needs whatsoever – exactly like God had always wanted his kingdom to be. Jesus had re-established God's kingdom – he created a kingdom of people who did what God wants – who always wanted to do good deeds, shared everything they owned, and met the needs of everyone around them.

There were no needy people among them because they all obeyed God. This is exactly what God had said through Moses: "There should be no needy people among you... if you obey the LORD your God completely."

So, there is a direct connection between what Moses said the Kingdom of God should be, and what the early Church was actively doing.

The Kingdom of God, as established through Moses, was supposed to have no needy people. And the Kingdom of God, as established through Jesus, had no needy people.

Here is another example:

In the Law of Moses, it said, "If you lend money to one of my people who is poor, do not treat him as a creditor would. Take no interest."<sup>37</sup>

When Ezekiel prophesied, he described a righteous man: "He does not lend money for interest or profit."<sup>38</sup>

In both the Law and the prophets, God said that he wants his people to be people who don't try to profit off the poor – they don't lend to people out of a desire to try to make a profit. He wants people who give to the poor and lend to them because of love – because they *want* to help. He doesn't want them concerned about whether or not they get anything in return.

That's what God wanted with Israel, and then, when Jesus came, he said, "If you lend things to people, always hoping to get something back, what praise should you get? Even sinners lend to other sinners expecting to be repaid in full! But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back."<sup>39</sup>

So, the Law of Moses told people not to charge interest on any loans, the prophets said the same thing, and then Jesus came – not only saying to not charge interest, but also to lend to people

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 4:32-35, emphasis added

<sup>36</sup> Ref. Matthew 7:12; 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-14; James 2:8; 1 John 3:11

<sup>37</sup> Exodus 22:25

<sup>38</sup> Ezekiel 18:8

<sup>39</sup> Luke 6:34-35

without even expecting to be repaid!

Jesus taught the same thing Moses had already taught. He wasn't doing away with the Law of Moses. He came to write the Law on our hearts. He was re-establishing the Kingdom of Israel as God had always intended it to be.

Furthermore – if you look at what Jesus said, he didn't merely say, "don't charge interest." Jesus taught that we should lend to others without even expecting repayment. That means we should let people borrow from us and not even expect them to return what they borrowed. So, not only are we not getting interest on the loan – we're not even getting back what we gave the person in the first place!

But even this wasn't new. Moses had also said this...

"If there are poor among you, in one of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be selfish or greedy toward them. But give freely to them, and freely lend them whatever they need. Beware of evil thoughts. Don't think, 'The seventh year is near, the year to cancel what people owe.' Your eye might be evil toward your needy brother and not give them anything. Then they will call out to the LORD about you, and he will find you guilty of sin. Give freely to the poor person, and do not wish that you didn't have to give. The LORD your God will bless your work and everything you touch. There will always be poor people in the land, so I command you to give freely to your brothers and to the poor and needy in your land."<sup>40</sup>

In the Law of Moses, they had a law that said at the end of every seven years all debts would be erased. Moses told the people that if there were any needy people among them, they should lend to them even if that seventh year was near, and even if they knew they wouldn't get repaid for what they gave them. In other words, "lend to them without expecting to get anything back."<sup>41</sup>

Jesus taught the same thing Moses said. The only difference was that Jesus was saying, "this is how you should *always* think about it! This is what the Law was trying to teach you. You shouldn't *ever* worry about getting repaid. You should be happy to help whenever you see a need, and you shouldn't ever be concerned about whether or not someone can or will repay you."

Moses was saying that if there are any poor among God's people, then you should give freely to them without holding back and without worrying about whether or not they can repay you. That's the kind of kingdom God always wanted. It's the same thing Jesus taught, and it's the kind of kingdom we see in the book of Acts when the people followed the teaching of the apostles – they shared everything, giving freely, and meeting needs without worrying about themselves or about whether or not someone would repay them.

Another thing to note is that, in this passage, Moses said, "Your eye might be evil toward your needy brother and not give them anything."

Moses was saying that you have "an evil eye" when you care more about your own finances and your own well-being than you do about helping your brother or sister survive.

Jesus said the same thing.

"Don't store treasures for yourselves here on earth where moths and rust will destroy them and thieves can break in and steal them. But store for yourselves treasures in heaven where they cannot be destroyed by moths or rust and where thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will be where your treasure is. The eye is the lamp for the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. *But if your eyes are evil, your whole body will be full of darkness.* And if the only light you have is really darkness, then you have the worst darkness. No one can serve two masters. The person will hate one master and love the other, or will be devoted to one master and refuse to follow the other. You cannot serve both God and worldly riches. So I tell you, don't worry about the food or drink you

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<sup>40</sup> Deuteronomy 15:7-11

<sup>41</sup> Luke 6:35



need to live, or about the clothes you need for your body. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes... Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. Then all your other needs will be met as well."<sup>42</sup>

Many Christians don't understand this passage because they don't understand what it means to have "evil eyes." But Moses told us what it means. You have evil eyes when you see a brother in need, but you choose to not help because you're more concerned about your own finances or your own well-being than you are about your brother in need. The phrase "evil eye" was an idiom commonly used to refer to jealousy or selfishness – someone looking out for their own interests above the interests of others.

Jesus taught the same thing as Moses. We're all familiar with these verses where Jesus told us to not store up treasure on earth, that we should only have one master, to not worry about our own needs, and to seek first the kingdom. We've heard these verses hundreds of times. But right there in the middle of these verses, Jesus mentioned "evil eyes". He was saying you shouldn't be someone who looks out for your own interests above the interests of others. You shouldn't be selfish. You should help the brothers and sisters in need – just like Moses said.

This means that when Jesus taught these other things we're all so familiar with – storing treasure in heaven, not loving money, not worrying about our own needs, and seeking first the kingdom – his point was that we should look out for the needs of one another, and not look out for ourselves or do what's in our own best interest.

In other words, by saying "evil eyes" in the midst of this context, he was saying, "don't store up treasure on earth – give freely to those who are in need. You cannot serve both God and worldly riches – so, give freely to those who are in need. Give freely to those who are in need without worrying about your own needs – what you will eat, drink or wear. If you seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, God will take care of your own needs."

Jesus was telling us to have good eyes – not evil eyes. His point was not just "don't love money." His point was that we should give freely to the poor – just like Moses told us to – and just like we see throughout the early Church in the rest of the New Testament. That's what it truly means to "not love money."

He said that if your eyes are evil, your whole body will be full of darkness – and if the only light you have is really darkness, then you have the worst darkness.

John said the same thing:

"Anyone who claims, 'I am in the light,' but hates a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light and there is no cause of stumbling in him. But whoever hates a brother or sister is in darkness, lives in darkness, and does not know where to go, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."<sup>43</sup>

John and Jesus were saying the same thing. You are in the light if you have "good eyes." Or in other words, you are in the light if you help the brothers and sisters in need with no regard for yourself. But, you are in the darkness if you have "evil eyes." Or in other words, you are in the darkness if you ignore their needs and take care of your own needs instead.

John taught the same thing as Jesus, and Jesus taught the same thing as Moses.

Jesus taught people to live the way that God wanted his people to live from the very beginning. He taught us to love others and look out for their needs instead of looking out for our own needs. He taught us to live the kind of life that Moses taught the people to live. He taught us the point of the Law and the prophets.

If we miss the point of what they were saying, then we very well may think we're in the light

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 6:19-25,33, emphasis added

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 2:9-11

when we're really still in the darkness. And Jesus said that's the worst kind of darkness.

Here are a few more examples of things Moses said:

“When you harvest your crops on your land, do not harvest all the way to the corners of your fields. If grain falls onto the ground, don't gather it up. Don't pick all the grapes in your vineyards, and don't pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. You must leave those things for poor people and for people traveling through your country. I am the LORD your God.”<sup>44</sup>

Here, Moses was talking about your own land – your own fields. You've worked hard in your fields. You own them. Everything growing in them belongs to you. But Moses was saying, “don't harvest all of it. Don't pick everything. Purposefully leave some of it behind and allow those who are poor to come onto your property and pick your food from your fields without paying for it.”

Today, most Christians would call that “stealing.” Christians have the mindset that every person should have the right to charge for their labor. They have the mindset that no one should ever come onto their property and take anything that belongs to them. Sure, they don't mind giving when they feel like it – but they don't think it is someone else's right to have what they have.

But that is not God's perspective. God wants his people giving without holding back. He wants them to allow others to freely take their stuff without hindering them. He wants his people to ensure that everyone else has enough to eat without concern for their own well-being. He wants his people to care more about others than they do themselves. That is what it means to live righteously. That is what it means to do to others what you would want them to do to you. In God's eyes, everyone should have the right to eat – and if one of his people has more than others, those who have less have the right to meet their needs from that person's excess. That is part of the Law of God's Kingdom – and it's summed up in *love*.

When God promised to re-establish the nation of Israel as a people with the Law written on their hearts, he was promising to recreate the nation as a group of people who would live this way naturally. He was promising to create a nation of people who, as Paul said, always want to do good deeds.<sup>45</sup> He was promising to create a nation in which those who are rich use their riches to do good deeds and generously share with others.<sup>46</sup>

Moses also wrote, “At the end of every third year, everyone should bring one-tenth of that year's crop and store it in your towns. This is for the Levites so they may eat and be full. (They have no land of their own among you.) It is also for foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns so that all of them may eat and be full. Then the LORD your God will bless you and all the work you do.”<sup>47</sup>

God wanted every single person who lived in his kingdom to bring a portion of what they grew and store it for those who didn't have their own means of providing for themselves. The point of this law was love. It was to give to those who needed help. It was to show kindness and compassion.

This is the true purpose of tithing. It's not to pay for church buildings, special equipment, and elaborate events. It's not to pay salaries to people. Tithe was always meant to feed the hungry and provide help for the poor. The point of tithing was to give generously and freely without holding back. The point of tithing was to make it so that there was no one in need within God's Kingdom.

That's what God wants.

He doesn't want fancy church buildings. He doesn't want the best equipment or instruments or conferences. He wants love. He wants the hungry to have food. He wants the thirsty to have water.

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<sup>44</sup> Leviticus 19:9-10

<sup>45</sup> Ref. Titus 2:14

<sup>46</sup> Ref. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

<sup>47</sup> Deuteronomy 14:28-29

He wants his people looking out for one another – not trying to build rich comfortable lives for themselves.

The purpose of the tithe was clear: everyone would share with one another, and no one within the kingdom would be in need. There would always be enough for everyone. This is what God taught through Moses, it is what he wanted his kingdom to be, and it is what the Church did in Acts when Jesus re-established God’s Kingdom.

Later in Israel’s history, God continued to teach his people through David and Solomon:

“The wicked borrow and don’t pay back, but *the righteous give freely to others.*”<sup>48</sup>

“It is good to be merciful and generous. Those who are fair in their business will never be defeated. Righteous people will always be remembered. *They give freely to the poor.* Their righteousness will continue forever. They will be given great honor.”<sup>49</sup>

“Whenever you are able, do good to people who need help. If you have what your neighbor asks for, don’t say, ‘Come back later. I will give it to you tomorrow.’”<sup>50</sup>

“The wicked want what other evil people have stolen, but *good people want to give what they have to others.*”<sup>51</sup>

“Whoever mistreats the poor insults their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”<sup>52</sup>

“...righteous people give without holding back.”<sup>53</sup>

“Righteous people care about justice for the poor, but the wicked are not concerned.”<sup>54</sup>

The righteous give freely to others. They give freely to the poor. They don’t hesitate. They don’t delay. They want to give what they have to others – not hold onto it for themselves. They honor God by being kind to the needy. They give without holding back. They care about justice for the poor.

These are the things God cares about. This is the kind of life God values. This is what God always wanted his kingdom to be.

But the people of Israel refused. They wanted to grow richer. They wanted to increase their own standard of living. They began to look out for themselves. They began to increase their own wealth.

So, God sent the prophets to them:

“Your rulers are rebels... They don’t defend the cause of the orphans or listen to the widows’ needs.”<sup>55</sup>

“What gives you the right to crush my people and grind the faces of the poor into the dirt?”<sup>56</sup>

“The vineyard belonging to the LORD of Heaven’s Armies is the nation of Israel; and the people of Judah are the garden that he loves. *He looked for justice*, but there was only injustice. *He hoped for righteousness*, but there were only cries of distress. *Woe to you who add more houses to your houses and more fields to your fields until no space is left.*”<sup>57</sup>

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, and those who write laws that make life hard for people.

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<sup>48</sup> Psalm 37:21, emphasis added

<sup>49</sup> Psalm 112:5-6,9, emphasis added

<sup>50</sup> Proverbs 3:27-28

<sup>51</sup> Proverbs 12:12, emphasis added

<sup>52</sup> Proverbs 14:31

<sup>53</sup> Proverbs 21:26

<sup>54</sup> Proverbs 29:7

<sup>55</sup> Isaiah 1:23

<sup>56</sup> Isaiah 3:15

<sup>57</sup> Isaiah 5:7-8, emphasis added

They withhold justice to the poor, and they deprive my people of their rights.”<sup>58</sup>

“I will tell you the kind of fast I want: Free the people you have put in prison unfairly and undo their chains. Free those to whom you are unfair and stop their hard labor. Share your food with the hungry and bring poor, homeless people into your own homes. When you see someone who has no clothes, give him yours, and don’t refuse to help your own relatives.

“Then your light will shine like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your righteousness will walk before you, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. Then you will call out, and the LORD will answer. You will cry out, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you stop making trouble for others, if you stop speaking wickedness and pointing your finger at others, if you feed those who are hungry and take care of the needs of those who are troubled, then your light will shine in the darkness, and you will be bright like sunshine at noon. The LORD will always lead you. He will satisfy your needs in dry lands and give strength to your bones. You will be like a garden that is well-watered, like a spring that never runs dry.”<sup>59</sup>

The people of Israel were fasting to God and praying to him, but he wasn’t listening to them. He didn’t want religion. He wanted love. He wanted a nation that does what is right. He wanted them to be fair to others and help those in need. He wanted them to feed the hungry. He wanted them to meet the needs of orphans and widows and those who needed help. He wanted justice. He wanted righteousness. He wanted them to bring poor, homeless people to come live with them in their own homes. He wanted them to give clothes to those who didn’t have any.

He wanted equality within his kingdom. He wanted the needs of the poor to be met. He didn’t want any of his people to be in need. But his people weren’t doing this. They thought they obeyed God because they sang songs to him, raised their hands, prayed, and had religious meetings. But they didn’t meet the needs of their brothers and sisters. They were apostate.

God sent the prophets to Israel, rebuking them because they weren’t obeying the Law of Moses. They weren’t living in love.

God said to King Jehoiakim, the son of King Josiah, “Does having a lot of cedar make you a great king? Your father was satisfied to have food and drink. He did what was right and fair, so everything went well for him. He helped those who were poor and needy, so everything went well for him. That is what it means to know God,” says the LORD.”<sup>60</sup>

Having a rich, comfortable life doesn’t make you great. Having a nice home doesn’t make you great. Being a successful businessman doesn’t make you great. Life is not measured by how much one owns.<sup>61</sup>

Josiah was the king of Judah. But he was content to just have the food and drink he needed. He didn’t live in luxury. He didn’t hold onto stuff for himself. He didn’t increase his own standard of living. He didn’t prioritize his own needs. He lived simply. He helped the poor. He met the needs of the needy. He looked out for others above himself. He gave up his own comfort and his own resources and his own excess to meet the needs of those living in God’s Kingdom.

And God said, “That is what it means to know God.”

Or, as John said, “if we say we have fellowship with God, but we continue living in darkness, we are liars and do not follow the truth.”<sup>62</sup> “Anyone who says, ‘I know God,’ but does not obey his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.”<sup>63</sup> “If people say, ‘I love God,’ but hate their brothers or sisters, they are liars. Those who do not love their brothers and sisters whom they have

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<sup>58</sup> Isaiah 10:1-2

<sup>59</sup> Isaiah 58:1-11

<sup>60</sup> Jeremiah 22:15-16

<sup>61</sup> Ref. Luke 12:15

<sup>62</sup> 1 John 1:6

<sup>63</sup> 1 John 2:4

seen, cannot love God, whom they have never seen. And God gave us this command: Those who love God must also love their brothers and sisters.”<sup>64</sup>

Nothing has changed. God still wants a kingdom of people who live the way Josiah lived – who give up their own standard of living because they’re more concerned about others than they are themselves.

That’s what it means to know God.

If you don’t live that way, you don’t know God. Even if you say you do. Even if you think you do.

When God sent Ezekiel to prophesy, he compared the city of Jerusalem to the city of Sodom. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah?

Remember how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by sending fire from heaven onto the cities and every single person died?<sup>65</sup>

Remember how you were taught in Sunday school that it was because Sodom and Gomorrah were sexually immoral and lived sexually immoral lives?

Yeah... that’s not why God destroyed them.

Ezekiel said, “This was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were proud and had plenty of food and lived in great comfort, but she did not help the poor and needy.”<sup>66</sup>

God completely wiped out those cities because those cities were full of rich people living in great comfort, with plenty of food, but they didn’t use their resources to help the poor and needy. They prioritized their own needs. They took care of themselves. They increased their own standard of living. They chased their equivalent of “the American dream.”

God didn’t destroy Sodom because of sexual sin, idol worship, drunkenness, or any of the things most Christians would expect today. No – those cities were utterly destroyed because they thought they had the right to hold on to what belonged to them even though there were other people who were in need and could have benefitted from those resources.

Peter said, “God also destroyed the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them until they were ashes. He made those cities an example of what will happen to the ungodly.”<sup>67</sup>

God destroyed those cities. He burned them until they were ashes. He did this as an example to us. And, through the prophet Ezekiel, he told us exactly what they did that warranted their destruction.

Do you see how serious this is to God?

Do you fear God enough to second-guess your own lifestyle and make sure that you’re living the kind of life that God would approve of?

The entire Old Testament is clear – from the Law of Moses through the teachings of the prophets. We’ve only gone over a small fraction of the places where this is taught – we haven’t even scratched the surface. (See our last video for more examples)

When Jesus said that all the Law and all the prophets are summed up in, “love your neighbor as you love yourself,” he didn’t mean that you can just make up your own idea about what it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself. He didn’t intend for you to use your own definition of *love*.

No – the Law and the prophets tell us what it means to love others. The Law and the prophets tell us what real love is.

Real love means helping those who are poor. It means feeding those who are hungry. It means

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<sup>64</sup> 1 John 4:20-21

<sup>65</sup> Ref. Genesis 19:1-29

<sup>66</sup> Ezekiel 16:49

<sup>67</sup> 2 Peter 2:6

welcoming the homeless into our own homes. It means using our resources to help those who are in need. It means eliminating all needs within God's Kingdom by giving up our own standard of living and our own resources. It means being more concerned about whether or not they have everything they need to survive than we are about our own preferences and our own comfort.

God wants a kingdom of people who do what is right, who live in radical love. He wants people who give up their own possessions and give to those in need. He wants people who care more about those around them than they do themselves. He wants total equality within his kingdom. He wants there to be no needy people within his kingdom. He wants total and absolute love.

When the nation of Israel rebelled against the Law of Moses and refused to repent after hearing the teaching of the prophets, God wiped them out. He told them, "you are not my people, and I am not your God."<sup>68</sup>

If people don't use their resources to help the poor and needy, then they're not God's people. If they hold onto their own resources and prioritize their own standard of living, they prove that God is not their God. As Paul said, "Anyone who is greedy is serving a false god."<sup>69</sup>

The nation of Israel refused to live the way God wanted. They cared more about themselves than they did others. They prioritized their own needs above the needs of others. They used their resources to increase their own standard of living. They still worshiped God, prayed to God, fasted to God, sacrificed to God, read Scripture, prophesied, and kept the feasts. But they didn't meet the needs of their brothers and sisters. They prioritized themselves. So, God scattered the nation of Israel across the world. He drove them out of his land. He allowed his own kingdom to fall. They had the reputation that they were alive, but they were dead. And he came against them suddenly – like a thief in the night.

But he gave them a promise: "They were called, 'You are not my people,' but later they will be called 'children of the living God.'"<sup>70</sup>

He promised to regather his scattered children and make them one again. He promised to rebuild his nation. He promised to write the Law on their hearts. He promised that his kingdom would return under a new covenant with David's descendant on the throne forever.

Then he sent his one and only Son.

Jesus didn't teach, "believe in me and you'll be saved!" At least, not in the modern-sense that most Christians think today.

Jesus taught fidelity. He taught loyalty. He taught faithfulness. He taught reliability.

Jesus taught action. He taught the Law of Moses. He taught love.

He taught, "Blessed are those who show mercy to others, for God will show mercy to them."<sup>71</sup>

"If someone wants to sue you in court and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. If someone forces you to go with him one mile, go with him two miles. If a person asks you for something, give it to him. Don't refuse to give to someone who wants to borrow from you."<sup>72</sup>

"Those who give one of these little ones so much as a cup of cold water because they are my followers will truly get their reward."<sup>73</sup>

"And what is the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching but lets worries about this life and the deceitfulness of wealth stop that teaching from growing. So the teaching does not produce fruit in that person's life."<sup>74</sup>

"I tell you the truth, you must change and become like little children. Otherwise, you will never

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<sup>68</sup> Hosea 1:9

<sup>69</sup> Ephesians 5:5

<sup>70</sup> Hosea 1:10

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 5:7

<sup>72</sup> Matthew 5:40-42

<sup>73</sup> Matthew 10:42

<sup>74</sup> Matthew 13:22

enter the kingdom of heaven. The greatest person in the kingdom of heaven is the one who makes himself humble like this little child.”<sup>75</sup>

“If you want to be complete, then go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me... I tell you the truth, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>76</sup>

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to become first among you must be slave of all. In the same way, the Son of Man did not come to be served. He came to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many people.”<sup>77</sup>

“Whoever is your servant is the greatest among you. Whoever makes himself great will be made humble. Whoever makes himself humble will be made great.”<sup>78</sup>

“You pay tithe on everything you have – even your mint, dill, and cumin. But you ignore the really important teachings of the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”<sup>79</sup>

“The Son of Man will come again in his great glory, with all his angels. He will be King and sit on his glorious throne. All the nations of the world will be gathered before him, and he will separate them into two groups as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The Son of Man will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to the people on his right, ‘Come, my Father has given you his blessing. Inherit the kingdom God has prepared for you from the creation of the world. Because I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your house. I was naked, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

“Then the righteous people will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you into our house? When did we see you naked and give you something to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?’

“Then the King will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my brothers and sisters, you also did for me.’

“Then the King will say to those on his left, ‘Go away from me. You are cursed. Go into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. Because I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite me into your house. I was naked, and you gave me nothing to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you did not care for me.’

“Then those people will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison? When did we see these things and not help you?’

“Then the King will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you refused to do for even the least of my people here, you refused to do for me.’

“These people will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”<sup>80</sup>

Look at what Jesus taught.

He taught that if we show mercy to others, God will show mercy to us. He taught that we should give freely, without holding back, to anybody – even if they’re mistreating us. He taught that we would get a reward if we gave so much as a cup of cold water to someone because they were part

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<sup>75</sup> Matthew 18:3-4

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 19:21-23

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 20:26-28

<sup>78</sup> Matthew 23:11-12

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 23:23

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 25:31-46

of God's Kingdom. He taught that money, wealth, and possessions would choke some people because they would want to have those things more than they would want to do what God says is right.

He taught that we should make ourselves humble – make ourselves less than those around us and serve them and look out for their needs. He taught that we should sell our possessions and give to the poor. He taught that the most important things in the Law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness. He taught that on judgment day, he would separate people based on whether or not they helped the brothers and sisters in need.

Jesus taught love. He taught the same things Moses and the prophets had taught. He taught the fundamental principles of God's Kingdom. He taught what the early Church did. He taught people to stop living for themselves – to stop prioritizing their own needs, to stop living in excess, to stop loving this world, to give to everyone in need, to help others, to prioritize the needs of others, and to obey the Law of Moses.

All of this is just in Matthew.

In Luke, he said even more:

“But woe to you who are rich, because you have had your easy life. Woe to you who are well-fed now, because you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, because you will mourn and weep.”<sup>81</sup>

“Give to everyone who asks you, and when someone takes something that is yours, don't ask for it back.”<sup>82</sup>

“If anyone wants to follow me, they must set aside their own interests.”<sup>83</sup>

“As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. By chance a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite came there, and seeing him, he passed by on the other side of the road. Then a Samaritan traveling down the road came to where the hurt man was. When he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.”

“Then Jesus said, ‘Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?’ The expert on the law answered, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then go and do what he did.’”<sup>84</sup>

“Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. Life is not measured by how much one owns.”<sup>85</sup>

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make for yourselves moneybags that will not wear out, the treasure in heaven that never runs out, where thieves can't steal and moths can't destroy. Your heart will be where your treasure is.”<sup>86</sup>

“When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite only your friends, your family, your other relatives, and your rich neighbors. At another time they will invite you to eat with them, and you will be repaid. Instead, when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because they have nothing and cannot pay you back. But you will be repaid at the

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<sup>81</sup> Luke 6:24-25

<sup>82</sup> Luke 6:30

<sup>83</sup> Luke 9:23

<sup>84</sup> Luke 10:30-37

<sup>85</sup> Luke 12:15

<sup>86</sup> Luke 12:33-34



resurrection of the righteous.”<sup>87</sup>

“...you must give up everything you have to be my follower.”<sup>88</sup>

“Those who try to keep their lives will lose them. But those who give up their lives will save them.”<sup>89</sup>

Jesus taught that it will be terrible for you if you’re rich and enjoying a relatively easy life where you have everything you need, and you’re well-fed, and you’re laughing. You’ve worked hard to make sure you have everything you need – meanwhile others around you are struggling to survive. It will be terrible for you because you didn’t obey his commands – you looked out for your own interests instead of the interests of others.

He taught that we should give to every single person who asks. More than that – he taught that if someone takes something that belongs to us, we shouldn’t ask for it back.

He taught that in order to follow him, we must set aside our own interests. That means we’re no longer people who look out for ourselves. We’re no longer people who make our decisions based on what’s good for us. We must be people who stop looking out for our own well-being and are more concerned about the needs of others.

He taught that we should show mercy to others and help when we see someone in need. He taught that we shouldn’t accumulate wealth and possessions and try to have a higher standard of living. He taught that we should sell our possessions and give to the poor, and that our heart will be where our treasure is.

He taught that we should invite the poor and the needy to our meals and give to them generously – even though they will never be able to repay. He taught that we must give up everything we have in order to be his follower. He taught that the only way to have true life is to give up this life and stop living for this life.

These are the things Jesus taught.

He taught love. He taught radical love.

He taught people to stop living for themselves – not just in overtly sinful ways, but in the way that everyone in the world naturally lives. He taught that we should stop looking out for our own needs. We should give generously and freely without holding back. We should help others with their needs and make our decisions around what’s best for them. We should give up everything that belongs to us.

When Jesus prayed to the Father, he prayed for the Church, “I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who believe in me because of their teaching. Father, I ask that they can be one. As you are in me, and I am in you, I ask that they can also be one in us. Then the world will believe that you sent me. I have given these people the glory that you gave me so that they can be one, just as you and I are one. I will be in them and you will be in me so that they will be in perfect unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you loved them just as much as you loved me.”<sup>90</sup>

Jesus prayed that we would be one – one with him and the Father, and also one with each other. He prayed that we would all be united with one another in the same way that he is united with the Father.

But just a few sentences earlier, he explained what his unity with the Father looks like. He said, “All I have is yours, and all you have is mine.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Luke 14:12-14

<sup>88</sup> Luke 14:33

<sup>89</sup> Luke 17:33

<sup>90</sup> John 17:20-23

<sup>91</sup> John 17:10 (NIV)

Jesus wants us to be just as united with one another as he is with the Father. That means sharing everything in common, it means no one considers anything to belong to themselves. Everything owned by one person is owned by everyone, and everything owned by everyone is owned by each person. That is the biblical definition of *unity*. That is what it means for the Church to be united. As Luke said in Acts 4, “The group of believers were united in hearts and spirit. No one said any of their possessions was their own. In fact, everything was held in common.”<sup>92</sup>

They held everything in common because they were united with one another in the same way that Jesus is united with the Father. They understood the unity taught by Jesus, and they understood the outcome of that unity.

Jesus said this kind of unity would cause the world to know that he was sent by God, and it would cause the world to know that God the Father loves us just as much as he loves Jesus. The world won’t learn about God and believe in Jesus through words alone. The world won’t learn about God or believe in Jesus because of evangelism, apologetics, debates, or charismatic preachers. No – ultimately, the world will only know and believe when they see true unity. Or as Jesus also said, “All people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”<sup>93</sup>

Jesus wants his body united. He wants his body just as united with one another as he is with the Father. He wants his body knit together in brotherly love. He wants his body held together as a family. He wants the whole body to grow up and be strong through love.<sup>94</sup>

Jesus is the promised King. He is the descendant of David. He is the King of Israel. The Kingdom of God is here, and Jesus is its King. Jesus taught people to live as God always wanted his people living. He taught people the point of the Law of Moses. He came to establish a nation of people who uphold the Law through fidelity, loyalty, faithfulness and reliability.<sup>95</sup> He established a kingdom of people who follow the Law because they are filled with love and want to use their lives to do good deeds. He created a people who no longer live for themselves, but live for him.

So, when we look at the early Church, we need to recognize why they did what they did.

They sold their possessions and gave to the poor among them.

Why?

Because that’s what Jesus directly taught, and that’s what God always wanted his people to do.

They made sure there were no needy people whatsoever within the body of Christ. They lived in a “holy communism,” where everyone willingly shared everything in common and everyone had their needs met because those who had more gave up their excess and helped those who had less.

Why did they do that?

Because that’s what the Kingdom of God is supposed to be. There aren’t supposed to be any needy people within his Kingdom. Furthermore, they did that because Jesus taught his disciples so many times to look out for the needs of others and help the poor.

The early Church lived a radical lifestyle. It was extreme. It cost them their comfort, their pleasure, their own personal dreams, their possessions, their money, their time, and their entertainment. It cost them their whole lives.

They took Jesus literally.

They lost their lives so they could find life. They gave up everything so they could have Jesus. They understood that Jesus had come to re-establish the Kingdom of God and create a united Kingdom of people who all willingly gave up their own possessions and their own money in order to

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<sup>92</sup> Acts 4:32

<sup>93</sup> John 13:35

<sup>94</sup> Ref. Ephesians 4:15-16

<sup>95</sup> Ref. Romans 3:31

meet the needs of everyone else within the Kingdom.

They lived in this radical, extraordinary love for one reason:

That's what real love is.

Jesus demonstrated this love for us in his own actions, and he taught this love through his words. This was the love God taught from the very beginning – not just with Jesus, but from the beginning of time. This is the kind of love God has always wanted. This love is what it means to know and love God.

In the Law of Moses, God created a nation that was supposed to be full of people who actively gave to the poor, met the needs of one another, helped those who needed help, and had no needy people among them whatsoever. They were supposed to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters – their fellow Israelites, all born as children of Abraham. They were supposed to be a society of people where there were no needy people whatsoever because everyone used their own resources to meet the needs of one another.

He sent the prophets to them when they weren't living this way, telling them to repent.

And then Jesus came, re-establishing the Kingdom of God, creating a kingdom of people who all lived the way God originally intended. He taught the same thing God had always wanted. He taught his people to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters – fellow citizens of God's Kingdom, all born as children of God. He taught them to be a society of people where there were no needy people whatsoever. He taught them to use their own resources to meet the needs of one another.

The apostles then taught this to the early Church, and the early Church lived it out. They sold their possessions to help the poor. They welcomed strangers into their homes. They made sure there were no needy people among them. They lived in total equality with one another.

They lived that way because that's what the Kingdom of God is. That's what God always wanted his people to do. That's what Jesus came to establish.

Anyone who does not live that way is not in God's Kingdom.

All the Law, all of the prophets, and all of the New Testament teach us what real love is. Unless you live in the kind of love God wants, then you're not living in true biblical love.

Many Christians think they're obeying Jesus when they're not. They use their own definition of love, or they don't let love *define* their lives. For example, they give to homeless people, they help drug addicts, or they do some type of ministry for needy people. But then, when they're done, they go home to their comfortable life, their high-paying career, their nice car, and all their other worldly possessions. They go back to pursuing the American dream for themselves. They go back to looking out for their own interests.

That is not what it means to follow Jesus.

Yes, we should help the homeless. Yes, we should help the lost. Yes, we should help the drug addicts and the oppressed of this world. Yes – all those things are things we should do. But – first and foremost, the Kingdom of God is supposed to be a kingdom of people who have no needs whatsoever because everyone in the kingdom is looking out for the needs of everyone else rather than themselves.

The Church is supposed to be one body – one family. The Church is supposed to be completely united. The Church is supposed to be recognized by their radical love – a love that stops living for this world – a love that creates an alternative society of people where no one has any needs.

Christians can't "do ministry" and then return to their old, normal lives. If they're returning to an American lifestyle, then their old life never died with Jesus.

The first Church lived with one heart and one mind. They shared everything in common, and no one held on to more than the bare essentials for themselves. No one accumulated wealth. No one accumulated possessions. No one planned for retirement. No one sat around enjoying the entertainment and pleasure of this world. No one tried to have a nicely decorated home.

And no one was in need.

## Ep. 10 – Lies Christians Believe About The Kingdom of God

That's what it means to follow Jesus. That's what it means to live in love. That's what it means to know God.

Christianity today has become far too individualistic. It's become completely internal and personal. Christians think of it as this private matter between an individual and God. They have the mindset of, "I become a Christian, I love God, I read my Bible, I believe in God, I sing songs to God, and I pray."

That's not true Christianity.

Biblical Christianity was always about the body as a whole. It was about the community. It was about the Kingdom. It was outward-focused. It was about everyone else. It was about everyone looking out for each other. It was about prioritizing one another. It was about love.

True Christianity is not at all an inner, personal, private matter. True Christianity is about the congregation as a whole – the entire body of Christ. It's about everyone doing what is best for one another. It's about the entire Kingdom. It's where everything about your personal relationship with God is about what's good for others and not what's good for yourself.

The Bible is very clear that the Gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles was that God's Kingdom had arrived – God was re-establishing the nation of Israel, gathering his scattered people from all the nations and making them one. The Kingdom of God, as preached in the New Testament, is the same Kingdom it was in the Old Testament, and it has the same Law. But this time, God wrote his Law on the hearts of his people. This time, he made them into a people who want to do what is right. This time, instead of giving laws and rules for people to follow, he gave his people his Spirit to lead them into true love.

God's Kingdom is all about love. God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of people who live in true, biblical, radical love – just like Moses instructed in the Law, just like David and Solomon taught in Psalms and Proverbs, and just like all the prophets taught throughout their writings.

The early Church lived in that radical "holy communism" because that is what God wants his Kingdom to be. That's what he always wanted his Kingdom to look like. That's what true Israel is. And that's what our King wants his people to do.

True, biblical, radical love is when we follow the example of Jesus:

Jesus had everything. He was rich. He was in the form of God.

But he gave it all up. He made himself nothing. He became a slave. And he died.

Why?

Because we were in need.

Jesus showed us what true love is. He demonstrated it for us. He commanded us to love one another with that same kind of love.

The Kingdom of God is here. It's a Kingdom of people who live in the radical love of Jesus. Anyone who doesn't live in God's love is not part of God's Kingdom.

"We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands."<sup>96</sup>

"Those who do not love their brothers and sisters are not God's children."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> 1 John 2:3

<sup>97</sup> 1 John 3:10