

## Economic Principles, Part 5

Written by Calvin Fox  
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How do the Principles we have been discussing apply today? We jump ahead and begin by declaring our belief that the Covenant People of God today are the Church, the Body of Christ. What follows is predicated upon this truth. Inasmuch as the Church is the New Israel, the Land now belongs to it. "Israel and the Land" is a paradigm, a model, for the Church and the Land. [How we got to this position is another long study. Especially helpful is God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology by Elmer Armerding and An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today by Christopher J.H.Wright]

What could the "Land" be vis-a-vis the Church? Originally, the Land [not the entire Earth- the particular Land promised to Abraham and his descendants] was gifted to each Israelite Tribe and family for two reasons. First, it was a sign of membership in the Covenant People of God. But, Land no longer is a sign of this. Second, Land was given to the Israelites as a means of self-support: to provide income, sustenance, for its owners. Land is no longer the primary means of self-support for hundreds of millions of Christians around the globe. They are leaving any land they had and moving to live in ever growing cities. Of course, there is no life for anyone, apart from the Earth and its resources; but, the days of "family farming" are long gone for most people. Finally, there is virtually nothing about actual land in the New Testament at all.

For these three reasons, we will look for a parallel concept in which the "Land" would be an analogy or type of something else. That something else is the Kingdom. To live in the Land today is to live in the Kingdom of God. The latter must be carefully defined.

The major subject of the preaching and teaching of Jesus was the Kingdom. (Matt 9:35, et. al.). The word itself has two basic meanings: dynamic, spiritual Reign and objective Realm. "Kingdom" is not a synonym for Church. (Actually, the Kingdom is far greater and more inclusive than the Church. The Church is better considered the primary means or channel through which Christ works to accomplish the Goal, which is the Kingdom.)

First, we consider the dynamic Reign. This is the active, ruling Presence in the lives and affairs of people, all people, and nations, as well- it is God active in the world.

There are many parallels between Land and the Kingdom as dynamic Reign. In the person and work of Jesus, the Kingdom was present on earth among people. Lk 17:21 cf Matt 12:28. His work among and in us is a gift. We do not earn or deserve it. The Church is totally dependent on this Kingdom. All we have that is really worth while and essential comes from it. God is totally dependable to do His work in and among us. This presence and work is proof of our Covenant relationship with God. The Church is inconceivable apart from this dynamic Reign of God. God entrusts the experience of His Reign to local churches, families and individuals. In all these ways, the Land is like the Kingdom.

Furthermore, living in the Reign (as in the Land) requires a certain life-style of those who would

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do it. As Israel lost the Land, so Covenant people today, including local churches, can lose the presence and work of God, His reign, among or in them. As Israel was bound by God to live according to His Commands (Law), so the Church is accountable to God for how it lives. This is what it means to be His Covenant People. If a particular local expression of the Church does not obey God and keep the Covenant, the dynamic reign of God will be taken away from the. Luke 12:32 and Matt 21:43. The local Church needs to know that it can have "Ichabod" written over it (1 Sam 4:21) It will lose its "lamp stand". See Rev. 2:5, 3:16

The second meaning of Kingdom is objective Realm. This is daily life, in all spheres, organized according to God's Law, Principles and Norms. The personal, social and economic ethics and practices required of Israel in the land are also required of the Church that would experience the dynamic Reign of God today. It is gratitude for grace that motivates this obedience, this righteousness. Romans 14:17 "the Kingdom of God is... a matter of righteousness (Justice)". Matthew 6:10 [Pray:] "Your Kingdom come, your will be done (Your Law obeyed- Justice), on earth as it is in Heaven." Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Justice)".