

Biblical Issues in our Contemporary World

February 26, 2014

Session 20 Season 10

Wonderfully Made: Biblical Economics- ***Bible Economy***

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Donald L. Goertzen Teacher
Indian Hills Community Church Lincoln, NE



Wonderfully Made

*“I will give thanks to You, for
I am fearfully and wonderfully
made; Wonderful are [all] Your
works, And my soul knows it
very well.” Psalm 139:14*

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Biblical Issues in Our Contemporary World

Biblical Economy

Our Beginning Point-How we see things

- We have explained why the world is the way it is—the five events.
- 1. We have noted that the world is not a safe place because of the four judgments. Evil, harmful and shameful things are going to happen to what appears as randomly chosen individuals.
- 2. We know that each of us are unique individuals and equality of opportunity and outcome is neither intended nor desirable.

Biblical Economy

Our Beginning Point-How we see things

- Any attempt to reverse these fundamental conditions will only add to the misery of human existence.
 - It exacerbates the wretchedness of poverty and disease, and it quickens death, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Politicians may offer relief from God's judgment, but their financial trickery is incapable of delivering sustainable help.
 - Actually, they pile on a new level of misery as wealth is lost to the family, the nation and the world—forever!
 - The God-given Genesis Mandate cannot be fulfilled.
 - Disregarding the Mandate is part of the body politic, which presents the collective ideas of the Materialists (there is only matter).

Biblical Economy

Our Beginning Point-How we see things

- The Christian knows that he is living in a world that is under judgment. By knowing the Judge, he also knows:
- 1. That he must exercise due diligence and the pursuit of life while living in the environment of judgment. He cannot just give up. He must persevere to make good the Genesis Mandate.
- 2. That the judgments will be lifted when the Judge of the earth returns to rule in righteousness.
 - Acts 3:21; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22.

Judgment is **Suffering**

- Because God cursed the earth at and after the Fall, it should be expected that the world would become a dangerous and indiscriminately cruel place.
- Of course, Christians do not despair at this reality but find in it a way of explaining what can or cannot be changed. In any case—
- It does not change the Genesis Mandate. It is just impossible to complete before the kingdom, i.e., the Restoration. Acts 3:21; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22.

Jesus as the Economic Example

For those who believe in a works salvation, the works such as were performed by Jesus are avenues for obtaining salvation. That is why the Sermon on the Mount is, for some, the only meaningful Scriptural passage in the Bible.

Jesus and the Economy

- The “What would Jesus do?” (WWJD) question has been turned into an activists’ slogan for moralism. *If we knew what Jesus would do, then we have our instruction.* So it goes.
- Sounds good, but we are not Jesus! He is our standard for righteousness, but any attempt to emulate His life is impossible. Jesus did not show us how to live. Instead, He came as God incarnate to claim the Messianic office of King.
- But He would not establish His kingdom on earth without a converted people. Matt. 21:43

What did Jesus do?

- He healed a few blind, crippled and diseased men, and He raised a few dead men. He stilled a couple of storms. He fed people only a few times.
- While Jesus was presenting his Messianic claims, there were 3 meals/day x 365 days x 3 yrs. = 3,285 meals.
- He only provided a couple of meals in the record. Plus, He had a shore lunch ready for the disciples after His resurrection.
- That hardly meets the feeding needs of the nation.
- Obviously, Jesus had other purposes than to show us how to meet needs or how to live off of other folks.

Abuses Claiming Jesus as Example

- ◉ Did Jesus favor the poor-
 - > as good example of godliness? No!
 - > without regard for why they were poor? No!
 - > Did Matt. 25 (sheep and goat judgments—"you did it unto Me") represent the economically poor? No! The believer-sheep were (Semitic) and were being spiritually persecuted.
- ◉ Jesus' love for the neighbor-
 - > Makes no presumption that the neighbor has no responsibility or that the neighbor has rights to other people's property.

Jesus and the Poor

- His concern for the poor (and our concerns)
 - Is to warn the wealthy (well positioned) not to take advantage of the vulnerable poor. The wealthy are not to rob, mistreat or otherwise act without love for the poor.
 - Is that they may “in fact” be truly helped in their poverty, always with the aim to elevate them out of it. Giving money which perpetuates the poverty is easy, but giving real help is difficult and often not offered.
 - Yet there remains some who cannot be helped (aged, the infirm), and they always will remain impoverished.
 - These, Jesus said, would always be with us and should be part of our benevolence.

Really Helping the Poor!

- ◉ Act with prudence.
- ◉ “The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consist in tracing the consequences of that policy, not merely for one group but for all groups.”
 - > Henry Hazlitt
- ◉ Christians have been “shamed” into supporting policies that are well-motivated but make matters worse for the poor. (e.g.) The worst thing you can do for a drunk is to give him money!

Can we build a just society?
The hope of all who dream dreams!

If we can, we must!
If we cannot, then we must give in to another pursuit.

Can we build a just society?

The hope of all who dream dreams!

- We begin this unit with this question.
 - Can a just society be built?
- But what is the REAL question?
 - We can understand all the words except— “just.”
 - How does “just” describe a kind of society? What will be the characteristics of a “just” society? An equal one? A fair one? An unbiased one? An impartial society? Or what?
 - Perhaps, but all these need some objective standard of measurement. What exactly is justice?. A judge stands for legal justice; a yard stick stands for unchanging measurements. But what in society stands for justice? Or by what standard is justice measured?

Can we build a just society?

The hope of all who dream dreams!

- This question does not originate in the biblical text but is raised by **those** who, like Adam, presumed to make independent moral judgments.
 - > (Independent of God; judging what is good and evil.)
- It is these **interlopers**—presuming to stand as judges—who render what a just society is.
 - > A UNL feminist class teacher holds that young (preschool) children ought not to be “shaped” by parents as either male or female without the children having a say in their gender. (Feb. 2014). Who is standing as judge of parents? What kind of “just” society will this kind of rule produce?

Can we build a just society?

The hope of all who dream dreams!

- Why is there such a vicious attack on the natural order?
 - Does it not come from the idea of *materialism* — where there is only matter and where there is no Divine Being to bring order and providential care to the things that are? This is—
- Step one—Unseat the Divine Authority by claiming only materialism, which is the underlying idea of evolution. Now with the vacancy—
- Step two—Self-appoint, as a body politic, what is just.
 - This is when the creature assumes the prerogatives of God—certainly the same sin committed by Adam.

Turning the World Upside Down

- ²⁰Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
- ²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!
- Isaiah 5:20–21

Can we build a just society?

The hope of all who dream dreams!

- We can then say that a just society is not possible without the God of justice ruling on earth.
- We can also say that any attempt to build a just society with the body politic ruling will be a disaster for the entire creation. Because of the supreme antagonism towards the God of creation, the order of the body politic will turn everything “upside down.”
 - In our example, children will no longer be boys or girls. They will be girls-boys and boys-girls according to their “choice.”
 - This is the hope (?) of a “just” society—no order, no distinctions, full justice and freedom as long as the **body politic (the ruling class) is supported.**

Can a just society be built?

1. No, because no one can agree what is just.
2. No, because that which is just is rejected.

If there can be no ***just*** society, what
kind of society can be built?

The Kingdom of God will be a just society.
We speak of the present time when the King is not ruling.

We must not focus on **outcomes** in society but on **responsibilities**.

A well-ordered discharge of responsibilities will produce a society that is honoring to the Creator God. If we provide due diligence, God will provide the society.

Can a just society be built?

Russia was such an experiment!

- During the last 6 weeks, we looked at a “fearless” attempt to build a just society! Result: More than 100 million people died and hundreds of millions more lived in horrible misery.
- No matter what social engineers say today, it is not possible. It is not just getting better people to build it. Socialism is a fatally flawed system.
- All attempts end in tyranny and despotism at the expense of humanity—and Christianity in particular.
- But socialism’s quest to build a “just” society continues—and **justice** is a truant child.

“Marxism has not only failed to promote
freedom (justice), it has failed to
produce food.”

American novelist John Dos Passos

Free Market system is better than any
other system

Contrasting the free market with the managed market

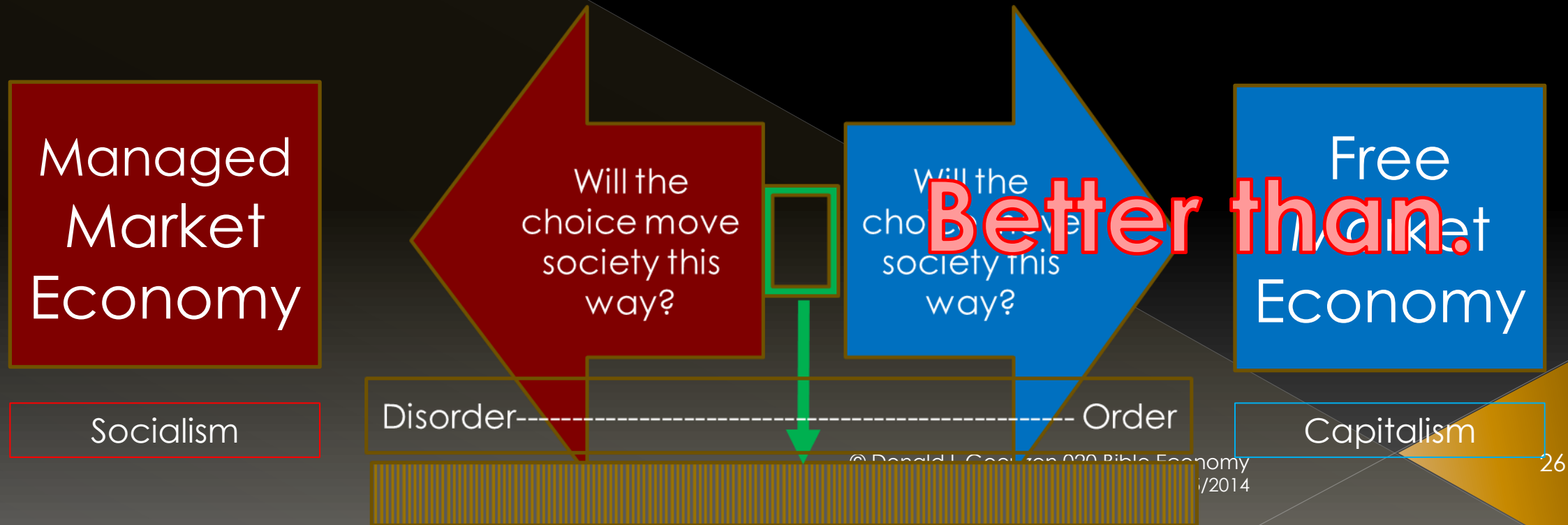
**#1 Free market economy is not
Perfect, only better than
any other economy!**

Free Market Economy is not Perfect

- Because of the acts of God, no economic system can overcome the drag on wealth caused by His judgments. There can be no utopian society!
- However, the free market system established at creation continues to work—in spite of the Fall—to the benefit of Man.
- As we said, Man must give due diligence to the work of filling and subduing, else he will fall into poverty and disgrace.
 - God has left him the resources necessary to improve his living on earth.

Free Market system is better than any other system

Contrasting the free market with the managed market



Jesus and the Free Market System

Socialists Disdain the Free Market System

- Our recent study of the Gospels reveals that Jesus was not advocating for vows of poverty.
 - We will talk about the poor and Jesus' attitude shortly.
- The Bible is not an economics book with a “money code,” but whenever economic issues are present or used in illustration, the underlying assumptions are free market systems (versus managed market system).

Wise Stewards

Jesus uses commonly understood economic practices

- At least three times in Scripture the faithfully investing steward is held up as a good example and is rewarded up to 10 times.
 - > Matt 20:1 ff.—The volunteering hired laborers were paid unequally. *Not supported by socialists ideals.*
 - > Luke 19:15-26—The steward with a return on investment of 1000% (1x10) is highly rewarded. The slothful “careless slave,” who did not invest but preserved the wealth, had his “investment” given to the most successful steward. *Not supported by socialists ideals.*
 - > Matt. 25:20-30—The 100% return on investment is rewarded. The slothful kept safe his investment but did not risk any. His was given to the one who was the most successful. *Not supported by socialists ideals.*

What is the point of the parable of the unequal wages?

- A set wage for all—unequal work but equal pay.
- If there is equality or fairness, where does it appear?
 - > No equality in pay rates.
- Equality lives in the free choice of each man. It was his will to go to work.
 - > Some knew what they were to receive. Others did not, but worked anyway. Those who agreed to the lower wage rate had no ground to complain.
- The sovereign landlord did what was permissible and legal. There is no injustice. The property owner coerced no one!

Old Testament and the Free Market System

Socialists Disdain the Free Market System

- 1. (Gospels record) Jesus accepts the free market economy.
- 2. (Abraham and Moses) The biblical record likewise speaks only of free market economies. No record of any central planning activities by the Jews.

Free Market System at Work

Free Market Economies

- On the farm before the combine (pick and shell), corn was picked, stored, dried and then in winter-spring was shelled. This was a labor-intensive task that could last all day or even longer.
- To facilitate getting the ear corn into the shelling machine, my dad would hire six or more local farmers, their sons or anyone who would work. Here it is similar to the landlord in our lesson who hired labors at a certain rate.
- When I became aware of this, dad was paying \$1.00/hr. for the work. This was good while it lasted, but it became harder and harder to find workers for \$1.00/hr. Some farmers were paying \$1.25, and others stepped up to pay the same rate.

Free Market Economies

- Others continued to pay \$1.00/hr., but they did not get the best workers who were waiting for the \$1.25/hr. jobs. (Maybe the older men or high school kids etc.)
- The market was (free) setting a *new* rate.
- But there was no law concerning what a laborer was guaranteed to receive.
- It just happened without a committee meeting or government agency setting the rates for worker shelling corn.
- It is likely that the new \$1.25 rate did not happen in one week or in the whole state or county. The rate spread on its own, and eventually some farmers began to pay \$1.50 etc.

Free Market Economies

- ⦿ There was no one to target with egg throwing when the rate went sky high! Somehow everyone was to blame or everyone got the credit.
- ⦿ No need to demonstrate at the county, state or federal offices because everyone knew the government had nothing to do with the newly-established base for corn-shelling workers.
- ⦿ Apparently, the farmers could afford to pay the extra 25 cents, and the worker benefitted with \$4 more in his pocket at the end of the day. This was a win-win encounter.

Free Market Economies

- Imagine what would happen to this simple arrangement if the farmers and workers each had lawyers representing them.
- Now a whole different way of setting wages would be established.
- Lawyers representing each side must be paid from the money the shellers make. Suppose they settled for \$1.25, and 15 cent went to pay the lawyers. Net loss to the shellers—15 cents, only 10 cents gained. (And a bunch of hard feelings between neighbors who farm next to each other. Maybe an egg or two thrown in some direction.)

Free Market Economies

- ⦿ Then there is the possibility of dishonest, even illegal, influences. Some farmers may have paid off the lawyers to be less demanding when representing the shellers and settle for a lower wage.
- ⦿ Knowing that such misrepresentation could happen, there must be laws against it (must be written). If laws can be broken, then enforcement mechanism must be funded—a sheriff, his office staff, the overhead cost for investigations, court rooms, judges' salaries, jails or other punitive systems in place to make sure everyone is obeying the contract.

Free Market Economies

- ⦿ There is another layer of legal necessities when appeals are made for true justice—
- ⦿ All this instead of a simple free market that establishes the wage of a farm worker who needs a job in the winter.
- ⦿ Lesson: Every time we add something (better, more fair, more equitable, etc.) to the free market mechanism, wealth is stolen from the people who have actually worked for it. In the end—
- ⦿ The farmer is not better off. In fact, he is worse off after paying his lawyers and higher taxes to have a sheriff's department large enough to service the legal requirements. The shellers are not better off, either, for the same reasons. The only benefactors are those who “created no wealth” but only live off the wealth that others have made.

Living Wage now a Minimum Wage

- Summary
- 1) It is too complicated for a (L\$) to be set artificially, that is, by a human being. He cannot know what is necessary to set the appropriate level for everyone everywhere.
- 2) Whenever human agencies are part of the price-setting formula, corruption follows with a vengeance. In all, the more money, the more likelihood corruption is at work in setting the wage rate.

Private Property

Old Testament and Private Property Ownership

Socialists Disdain the Free Market System

- A free market can function only where there is ownership of private property.
- The (Mosaic) Law assumes private ownership when it condemns theft of it. Stealing from neighbors is wrong; taking from the poor is wrong; lying to “legally” extort money and goods is condemned. Restitution is demanded when the private wealth is taken.
- Taxation by the king is tantamount to cultural agreement that property is owned by individuals, else the king would own it all and could not tax himself.

Old Testament and Private Property Ownership

Socialists Disdain the Free Market System

- In the Law, land ownership was personal but regulated. Its use was always in private control, and the time for its use (in years) was predictable.
- Land **sold** was, in fact, only “lease-sales” because the land reverted to the original tribal family every (calendar) fifty years.

● Purpose of government – there must be laws that support and defend for the ownership of private property. You might be able to move the fence.

That is why the west was wild!
No government to protect.

Private Property Held by Public Titles

- The importance of legal titles to property: “When individuals and businesses do not possess verifiable addresses or documented and protected property rights, their assets are rendered useless. They cannot use the small houses they live in or the land they occupy as a basis for borrowing money and starting a small business. Only when people have legal titles can they borrow, invest, and expand from the value of their property.” Poverty of Nations P 149
- If a squatter can take your crop, you have no self-interest incentive to sow the next one.

Motivation Due to Self-Interest

Self-Interest is not Selfishness.

- Christians may have a hard time thinking about self-interest because it seems as if anything having to do with the self is sinful and is to be avoided. So when we suspect that we are acting in self-interest, we recoil and beg forgiveness.
- But self-interest need not be selfishness. Take our WWII soldier for example. Keeping his mouth shut will likely keep him or his buddies alive. Self-interest is acting appropriately under war circumstances.



Motivation Due to Self-interest

Self-Interest is not Selfishness

- In our terminology, we include our family, our loved ones and then the stranger. This descending order of duty is likely how all societies see responsibility.
- I wash my own face.
- I work to provide protection for my wife.
- I work to provide food for my children.
- I help my neighbor with his broken fence.
- I remove dangerous objects from roadways.

Are these acts
not acts of
love?
We are to love
our neighbor
as ourselves-
“self-love”

Motivation Due to Self-Interest

Self-Interest is not Selfishness

- ◉ Does not self-interest become my motivation in maintaining and creating wealth?
- ◉ Buying the gas for the cheapest price.
- ◉ Buying sale items listed at the market.
- ◉ Selecting the lowest interest rate for home or car mortgages.
- ◉ Buying a good brand rather than a cheaper poor brand.
- ◉ I do not generally walk around and buy these things for neighbors, friends and strangers. That would rob me and my family of the wealth generated for our good.

Motivation Due to Self-Interest

Self-Interest is not Selfishness

- The Bible has much to say about selfishness—as sin—which steals from others. The act is no longer in self-interest as a virtue but is turned into selfishness, a vice.
 - Selfishness, covetousness, deceit, etc.
- It may seem that there is self-interest in bank robbery, but when “self-interest” has gained robbery money, it is ill-gotten treasure. Now selfishness is disguised as a false self-interest.
- Self-interest is legal and loving; selfishness is illegal and hateful.

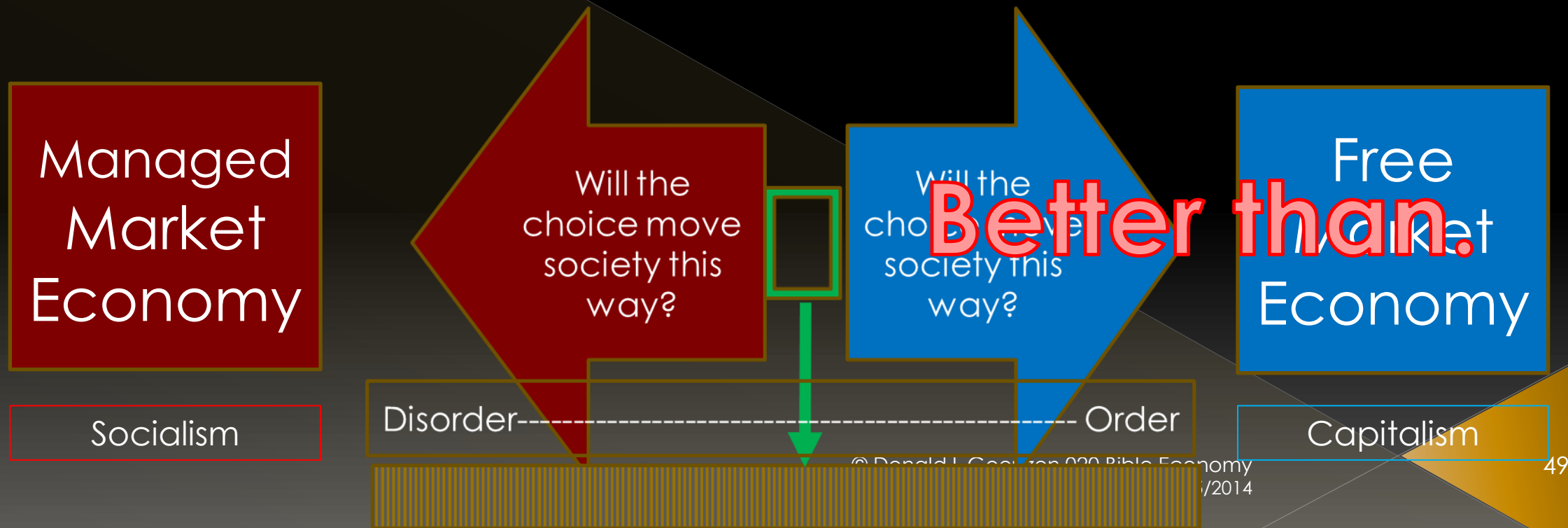
Summary

- Acts in self-interest are needed and expected.
- The market is free to move without government or a central agency.
 - Government regulations exist for *ideal purposes* and to manage sinners.
- Private property ownership and rights must be supported by the government.

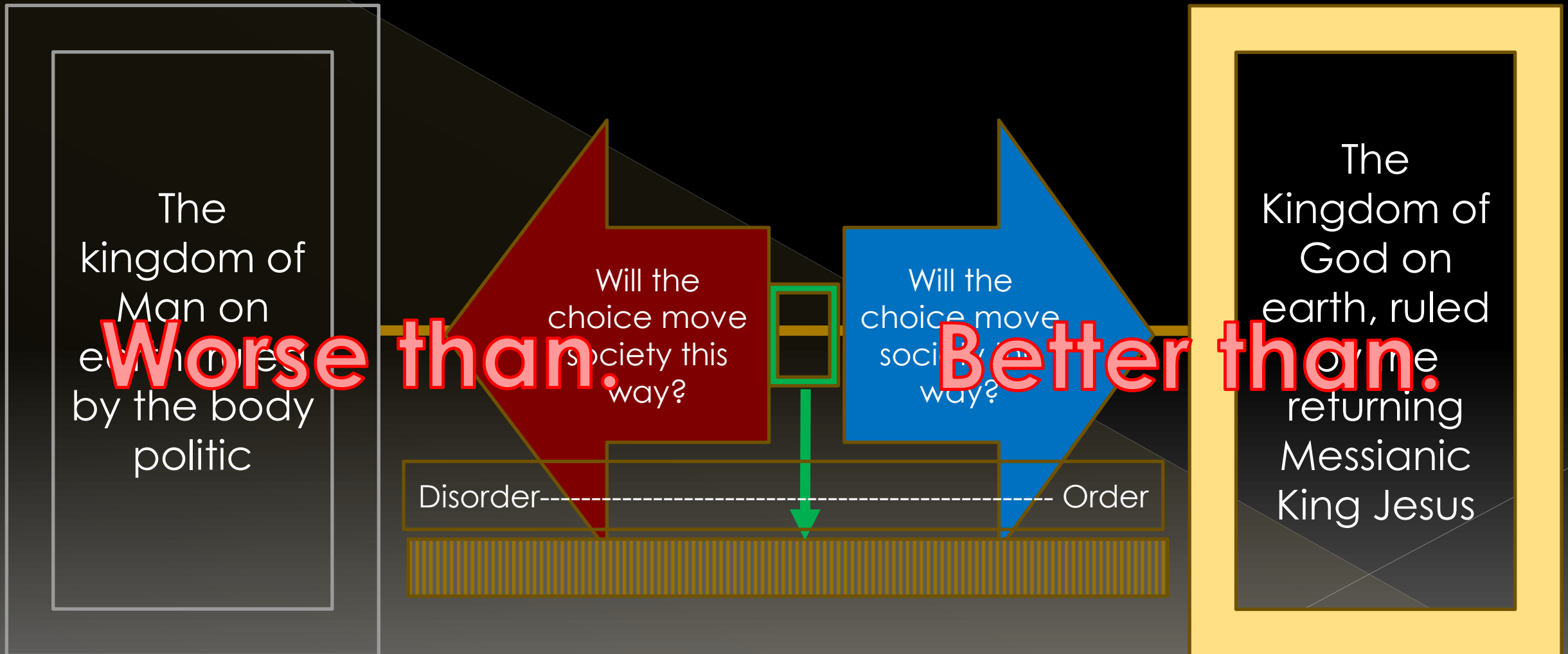
Economic and Moral Choices Move Culture

Free Market system is better than any other system

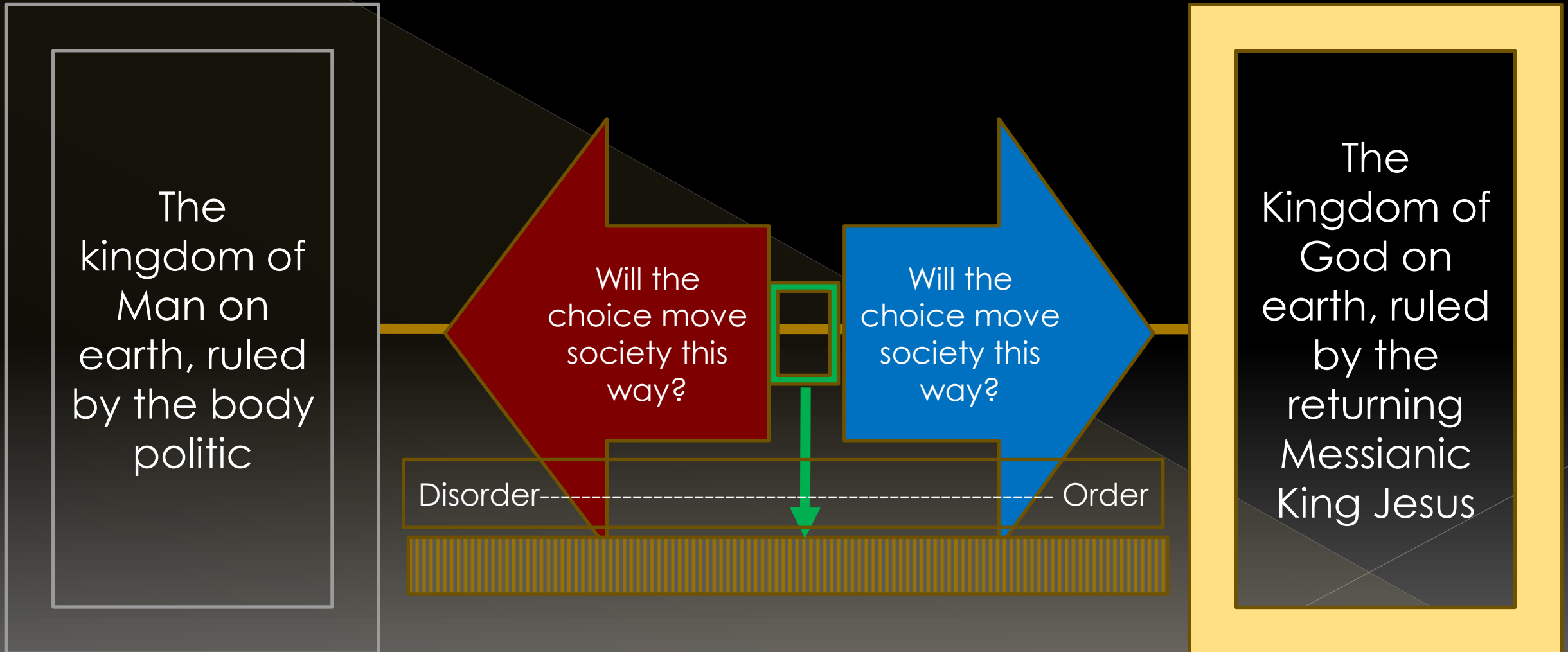
Contrasting the free market with the managed market



Economic and Moral Choices Move the Needle

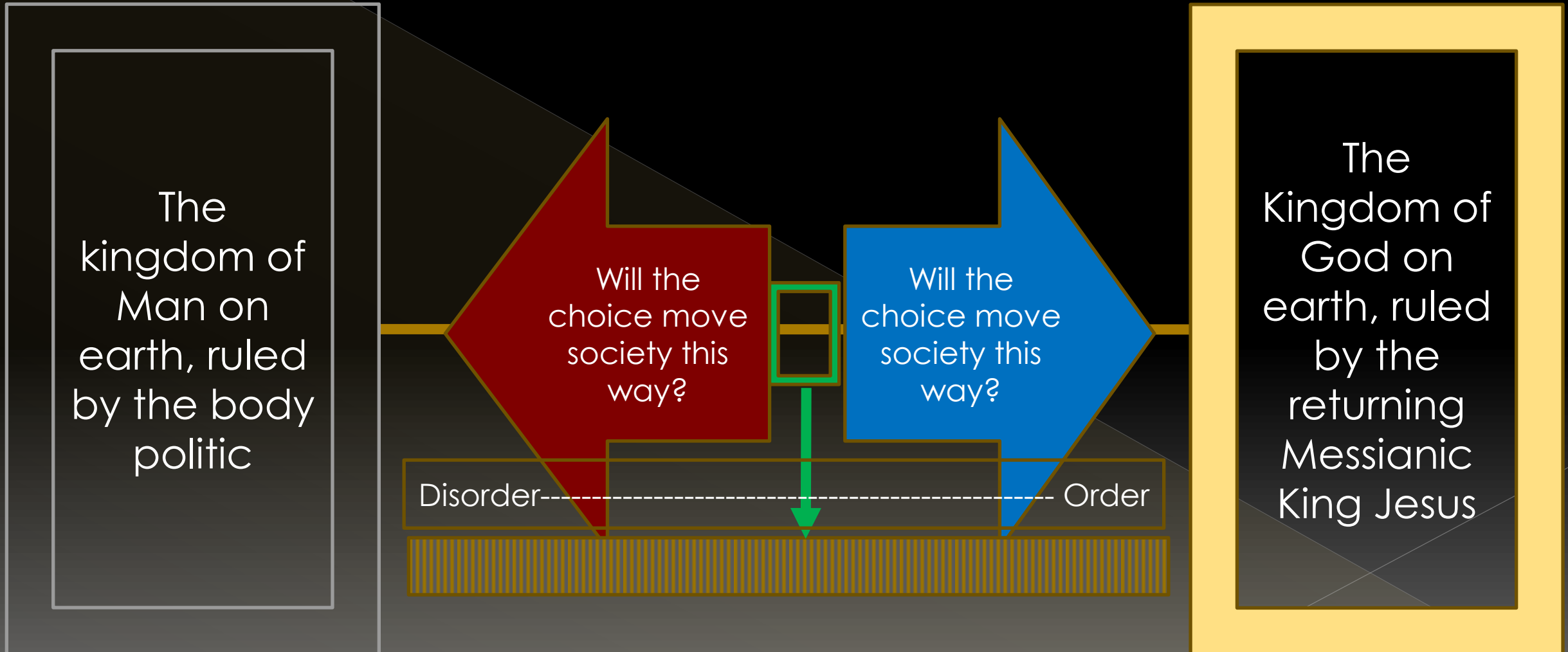


Economic and Moral Choices Move the Needle



Question about Boys and Girls

Which way does the **gender** “equality” decision move the needle?



Items Discussed

- Can a “just” society be established by Man? No! But Man can prosper by implementing the biblical pattern for economic success.
- The essential element of free markets is to naturally establish the price of goods and the cost of labor.
- The security of private property ownership with governmental protections gives safety to investments.
- Free to pursue self-interest in fulfilling the Mandate—to fill and subdue the earth—until Jesus comes.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 22 24 26 30

Fewer
Workers

More experienced
More trained

More reliable

More VALUABLE
TO THE
COMPANY

Jobs that are worth
more than \$10/hour
are not affected by
the Living Wage rules.
The law is superfluous

Jobs that are not worth \$10/hour are
eliminated by law, leaving out those who
are entering and want to remain in the
work force- become dependent on state welfare

Experienced worker

Trained-Ed. worker

Reliable worker

Thus far—