



THE CHURCH AND CIVIL GOVERNMENTS

(Theology for Breakfast 12/4/2021)

I. GETTING OUR ROLES STRAIGHT

The Church:

Jesus did not say, "Go into all the world and make it better."

What is the primary mission of the church?

1) Evangelize the world

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Rom. 10:14 ¶ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Rom. 10:15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

2) Grow in Christ together

Col. 2:19 ...holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Eph. 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

2Tim. 2:1 ¶ You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

2Tim. 2:2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2Tim. 2:3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 2:4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Titus 2:1 ¶ But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Titus 2:2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Titus 2:3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,

Titus 2:4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,

Titus 2:5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Titus 2:6 Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

Titus 2:7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,

Titus 2:8 and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.



The Government:

Jesus did not say, “Obey the government unless you disagree with their policies.”

What is the primary purpose of the government?

- 1) To carry out the purpose and plan of God

Dan. 4:35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

Psa. 22:28 For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

Psa. 47:8 ¶ God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.

Dan. 4:17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’

Rom. 13:1 ¶ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Rom. 13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

- 2) “...God’s servant for your good” (Romans 13:4)

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1. God, the supreme Lord and King of the whole world, has ordained civil authorities to be under him and over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword, to defend and encourage those who do good and to punish evildoers.¹

1Romans 13:1–4.

2. Christians may lawfully accept and carry out the duties of public office when called to do so. In performing their office they must especially maintain justice and peace,² according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom or other political entity. To carry out these duties they are authorized now under the New Testament to wage war in just and necessary situations.³

22 Samuel 23:3; Psalms 82:3, 4. 3Luke 3:14.

II. LIVING IN TWO KINGDOMS

DEFINITION: Christians live under the ruling authority of God as citizens of heaven awaiting our entrance into our home upon Christ’s return. Simultaneously, Christians also live as aliens in this world. As temporary citizens, Christians are to submit to the governing authorities and function for the betterment of their neighbors by biblical command.

What are these two kingdoms?



THE REDEMPTIVE KINGDOM

1) This world is not our home and therefore not our hope

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

1Pet. 2:11 ¶ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

2) We are awaiting full restoration when we arrive at home

Phil. 3:18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Phil. 3:19 Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. Phil. 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Phil. 3:21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

2Cor. 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

2Cor. 4:18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2Cor. 5:1 ¶ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THE COMMON KINGDOM

1) We submit to the common kingdom governing authorities

LBCF Chapter 24 - Civil Government

3. Because civil authorities are established by God for the purposes stated, we should submit in the Lord to them in everything lawful that they require. We should submit not only for fear of punishment but also for the sake of conscience.⁴ We ought to make requests and prayers for kings and everyone in authority, so that under their rule we may live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.⁵

4Romans 13:5–7; 1 Peter 2:17. 51 Timothy 2:1, 2.

1Tim. 2:1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 1Tim. 2:2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

1Pet. 2:13 ¶ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,

1Pet. 2:14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

1Pet. 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

1Pet. 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

1Pet. 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Rom. 13:1 ¶ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Rom. 13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.



Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

Rom. 13:4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Rom. 13:5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Rom. 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

Rom. 13:7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

2) The two kingdom's functions must always remain separate from each other

Example: Augustine's "City of God"

A Tale of Two Kingdoms by Michael Horton:

*"Consequently, each city has its own polity, serving distinct ends through distinct means. Although some of its citizens are converted to citizenship in the city of God, the earthly city is always Babylon. Like Daniel, believers pray for the city, work in the city, contribute to the city's general welfare, and even fight in its armies. However, they never forget that they are exiles and pilgrims. **Babylon is never the promised land.**"*

"The kingdom of God advances through the proclamation of the Gospel, not through the properly coercive powers of the state, although the church may take advantage of the relative peace that is possible in the earthly city (City of God, 19.26–27). These two cities we find "interwoven, as it were, in this present transitory world, and mingled with one another" (11.2). The good things that we do with non-Christian citizens to preserve and enlarge society really are good, but they are not ultimate goods. **The earthly city will never be transformed into the city of God this side of Christ's return in glory.** A Christian would then approach politics not with the question as to how the world can best be saved, **but how it can best be served** in this time between the times."

(Link: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tale-two-kingdoms>)

POINT:

The citizens of the redemptive kingdom have not been commissioned to transform the common kingdom. The common kingdom was not designed to carry out the work of the redemptive kingdom. The two function together but never for the advancement of the other.

NOTE: THEONOMY

The reformed have always rejected this unbiblical perspective because it collapses the two kingdoms together.

*Theonomy, from *theos* (god) and *nomos* (law). Theonomists hold that divine law, particularly the judicial laws of the Old Testament, should be observed by modern societies. [2] The precise definition of theonomy is the starting presumption that the Old Covenant judicial laws given to Israel have not been abrogated therefore all civil governments are morally obligated to enforce them (including the specific penalties) and furthermore that all civil governments must refrain from coercion in areas where Scripture has not prescribed their intervention (the "regulative principle of the state").*

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theonomy>)

THE CLASH OF KINGDOMS

1) Persecution is part of the normal experience of the Christian life

2Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,



1John 3:13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

Phil. 1:29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

1Pet. 4:12 ¶ Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

1Pet. 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

1Pet. 4:14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

1Pet. 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

1Pet. 3:13 ¶ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

1Pet. 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

1Pet. 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

1Pet. 3:16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

1Pet. 3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

2) Our response must always reflect our citizenship

Matt. 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Titus 3:1 ¶ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Titus 3:2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

1Pet. 2:11 ¶ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

1Pet. 2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1Pet. 2:13 ¶ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,

1Pet. 2:14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

1Pet. 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

1Pet. 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

1Pet. 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

1Pet. 2:18 ¶ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

1Pet. 2:19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

Rom. 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Rom. 12:20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

Rom. 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



III. RECALIBRATION (Moving our Motivations)

WE MUST RESIST THE GOVERNMENT!

When should Christians resist the government's authority?

- 1) Understanding the difference between command and preference

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

- a. Direct violation of scripture
 - i. Preaching the Gospel
 - ii. Worship forbidden
 - iii. Sexuality or marriage
- b. Personal preference or comfort (see verse above about submitting to governing authorities, there are no acceptations to preferences)
 - i. Anything that is not directly commanded in scripture
 1. Taxes
 2. Seat belts
 3. Building codes
 4. Speed limits

- 2) We never read of the church using leather force to fight back against the government

WE MUST REACH THE WORLD!

We must recalibrate our minds from the advancement of the American agenda to the mission of Christ. Our commission from Christ is to advance the kingdom of God, not preserve, transform, or tear down the common kingdom. All governments are our mission field, not our enemies.

- 1) Where we place our hope is where we place our energy

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1John 2:15 ¶ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

1John 2:17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- 2) We are not called to sit and wait, but to advance the message and mission of Christ
 - a. Building each other up
 - b. Preaching the Gospel
 - c. Planting churches