

THE CASE FOR CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT #2

I. Introduction

Tonight's teaching is Part 2 of our new series where we are making *'The Case for Christian Political Engagement'*. We need this message right now because many who call themselves Christians are *not* politically engaged. They are politically *unengaged*; and it may cost us our country.

Pastor Miles Rutherford

"The greatest threat to our society is not bombs, guns or climate change; it's a church that refuses to raise its voice."

The Bible clearly connects the welfare of God's people with politics.

Proverbs 11:11

By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

The Bible also tells us the importance of who holds the political power.

Proverbs 29:2

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan.

I find myself wondering how heavy America's groaning must become before God's people return to our calling to 'make disciples of all nations'? One element of the awakening is teaching on the topic; so with that in mind I want to 'make the case for Christian political engagement.

3 Points Tonight

**The early Church was a politically engaged Church
The political conflict was really a religious conflict
The same conflict has now come to America**

In short: what we are witnessing today is a collision between Church and State;

It is a spiritual contest over 'Who is Lord?' Christ or Caesar?
With that in mind, the title of tonight's message is...

"When Christ And Caesar Collide"

(Prayer)

I. The Case For Christian Politically Engaged Church

A. First, A History Lesson: The Early Church Was A Politically Engaged Church

1. **When Christ was born into the world, Israel was under the Roman rule of Emperor Ceasar Augustus**, also known as Octavian, who had proclaimed himself to be 'Savior of the World'

The Roman government even issued the declaration that 'salvation is to be found in none other than Augustus', and 'there is no other name given to men by which they can be saved.' (Nor could they pray to any other name).

a. R.J. Rushdoony pointed out that this was not uncommon during the course of human history.

R.J. Rushdoony

Pagan philosophies often viewed the State as the incarnation of God; this was true of Egypt, Babylon, and Rome, where the rulers were viewed and worshipped as gods. Thus, the issue for the New Testament church, was very literally, one between Christ and Caesar.

b. The early Christians were very aware that they were politically engaged!

Gary DeMar

We should be reminded that the rallying cry of the early church was "Jesus is Lord". And that this was a *political* statement.

c. To declare Jesus as Lord was a direct violation of the Roman law that declared Caesar was god; and to declare Jesus as Savior had political implications:

Acts 17:6

And they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too..."

Acts 17:7

...all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king — Jesus."

d. Rome did not see Christian dissent as religious; they saw it as political! The conflict in the early church was a collision of Christ with Caesar; the Christian confession of Christ was a political statement.

Joseph Boot

Theirs was not only a declaration of Christ as Savior, but also a resistance to a particular view of the state as ultimate lord and sovereign. This specific conflict which confronted the early church concerning the claims of the state and its limits is no less real in modern times.

e. Remember: Christ was not crucified over His claims to be a Savior, or a Healer, or a Sacrifice for sins; they killed Him because He claimed to be a King.

John 19:19

Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

f. If only the modern American church could see that...

R.J. Rushdoony

The conflict today is the same religious conflict of Rome and the early church in bitter war, and with many Christians martyred. It is Christ versus Caesar. For the Christian, there can be no compromise. What is at stake is not his property or income, but Christ's dominion and authority.

2. There will always be a collision of Christ and Caesar when the state presumes to take the place of God; a deification of the State.

a. Historically, no one has been more influential promoting the deification of the state than German philosopher Friedrich Hegel; a man who influenced the most evil political leaders of modern times: (Lenin, Marx, Hitler)

Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)s

“The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth. We must therefore worship the State as the manifestation of the Divine on earth; the State is God marching through the earth.”

b. In his book “Christ and the Caesars”, Stauffer rightly identifies the spiritual nature of political conflict...

Ethelbert Stauffer, “Christ and the Caesars”

The roots of the ancient conflict between church and state were *religious* in nature. Where the state claims to be god walking on earth, the state will claim sovereignty and will seek to control every area of life and thought. A free society then becomes impossible.

3. Some Christians seek the sidelines when it comes to politics; someone needs to tell them that there can be no neutrality!

a. German theologian Helmut Thielicke us understand it’s a theological issue on the subject of ‘sovereignty’; who has ultimate authority? Who has the final say-so? Christ or Caesar?

Helmut Thielicke

There can only be one Sovereign at a time. If God is not sovereign in a nation, then some other person, agency, or principle will inevitably become sovereign.

Helmut Thielicke

If God is not sovereign, another rival—usually the governmental spirit who claims to provide all—will declare that it can meet all needs and is therefore worthy of worship.

b. One famous liberal historian from the 1950's summed up the way they see themselves...

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

“It is only the actions of the State that can solve our spiritual problems and lead us to the ‘Promised Land’.”

4. This is what we face today; a government spirit that ‘claims to provide all’—that tells us it can meet all our needs—and holds itself ‘worthy of worship’.

a. This spirit is prideful and arrogant; it knows best...

- The kind of car we need to drive
- The kind of light bulbs we can use
- What our kids need to learn in school
- Coming soon: the kind of appliances we have in our home

b. Of course in America, they would never dare say out loud that they see themselves as god but that does not stop them from acting like god.

R.J. Rushdoony

The modern state does not hesitate to present itself, as Hegel described it, ‘as God walking on earth’. It claims jurisdiction over Christ’s church as lord and demands that we bow down and serve it as sovereign.

5. Sadly, many American churchgoers do bow down and meekly serve the state as it were sovereign. The question is...WHY? I will offer 2 answers:

a. First is ‘Dualism’: A dualistic view of life that wrongly compartmentalizes one’s spiritual life from one’s secular life.

b. Second, a defective understanding of what God’s word says about the public sphere

B. The Danger of Dualism

1. Dualism is deceptive worldview where one separates his 'spiritual' from his 'secular' life; the church place from the workplace.

John Cotton, Puritan Minister, (1585-1652)

A true believing Christian lives in his vocation by his faith. Not only my spiritual life, but even my civil life in this world; and all the life I live I live by the faith of the Son of God; He exempts no part of my life from the agency of His faith.

2. A Christian deceived by dualism will compartmentalize their life; offering a part of themselves to God but holding back another area of life for themselves.

Joseph Boot, "The Mission of God"

In His word, God absolutely forbids every inclination and every effort to break up your life into two parts; one for yourself, one part for Him. Simply put, all of life is religious. There can be no duality, no artificial dichotomy between the spiritual and historical, private and public, faith and life, heaven and earth.

Joseph Boot

All areas of life are created, sustained, and governed by God; and all things are through Him and of Him.

3. Notice how often Paul declares Christ Lord over ALL in just 3 verses...

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:17-18

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Gary DeMar

Shouldn't a disciple of Jesus know what the Bible says about abortion, same-sex sexuality, economics, education, politics, since the law and the prophets addresses these subjects?

4. The same God who ordained family government and church government ordained civil government; don't let dualism diminish your engagement in the 'all things' Christ has created.

C. The 2nd Problem: The Misunderstanding or Misapplication of Scripture

We have to overcome the misunderstandings and scripture misapplications that people use to support their non-political engagement.

1. We should just preach the Gospel.

a. Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not shrink from declaring to them the "whole purpose of God" ([Acts 20:27](#)). Being a new creature in Christ is the first step in a whole new life. Being born again does not stop at infancy. We are to grow up in the Christian faith, so every area of life is impacted by God's Word ([Heb. 5:11-14](#)).

2. Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world.

a. God's kingdom does not derive its power and authority from this world, but His kingdom is in and over this world whether people acknowledge it or not. We are to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" ([Matthew 6:10](#)). Doing God's will is the manifestation of kingdom living.

3. We must render to Caesar what's Caesar's

a. We don't live under Caesar. We live under a constitution, and we can remove and replace elected officials and "petition the government for a redress of grievances" (First Amendment). The people in Jesus' day could not. We do not have to settle for the political status quo.

4. Jesus didn't get mixed up in politics, so why should we?:

a. There are many things Jesus didn't do. He didn't get married, have children, or own a home. Should we follow His example in these areas? Jesus came as Lord of Israel; not Prime Minister of Israel.

5. There's a separation between church and state

a. The Bible does teach that there is a jurisdictional separation between church and state, but there is no separation between God and government, and that includes civil government.

6. We can't impose our morality on other people

a. The truth is that ALL law is the imposition of someone's view of morality. Someone is writing laws that define right and wrong; the question is, will the law come from a Christ's worldview or Caesar's?

7. We're living in the last days and Jesus is coming soon to rapture His church so why polish brass on a sinking ship?:

a. Jesus is indeed, coming again! But how can you say soon when Jesus no one can know the timing? Nor should we look to know?

b. To use the imminence of the 2nd coming as an excuse for political disengagement is lazy at best, and downright disobedient at worse.

c. Shouldn't we be about the Father's business until He comes?

III. Close: The Christian Case for Political Engagement

A. Review

3 Points Tonight

The early Church was a politically engaged Church

The political conflict was really a religious conflict

The same conflict has now come to America

We also looked at 7 examples of misusing scripture to justify non-political engagement

B. The Bottom Line

Joseph Boot

The choice before the early church is again before the modern church: Christ or Caesar? And though the modern state has dropped the theological language regarding its role, its functions, goals and purpose are no different from those of the Roman Imperial order.

Times change. New nations arise. But the political choice always remains the same!

R.J. Rushdoony

The alternative is Christ or Caesar, liberty or slavery, God or man. Is salvation man's upward reach to God or God's downward reach to man? Is God or the state man's savior? Wherever Christ ceases to be man's Savior, there liberty perishes as the state asserts its messianic claims.

Closing Prayer

Title