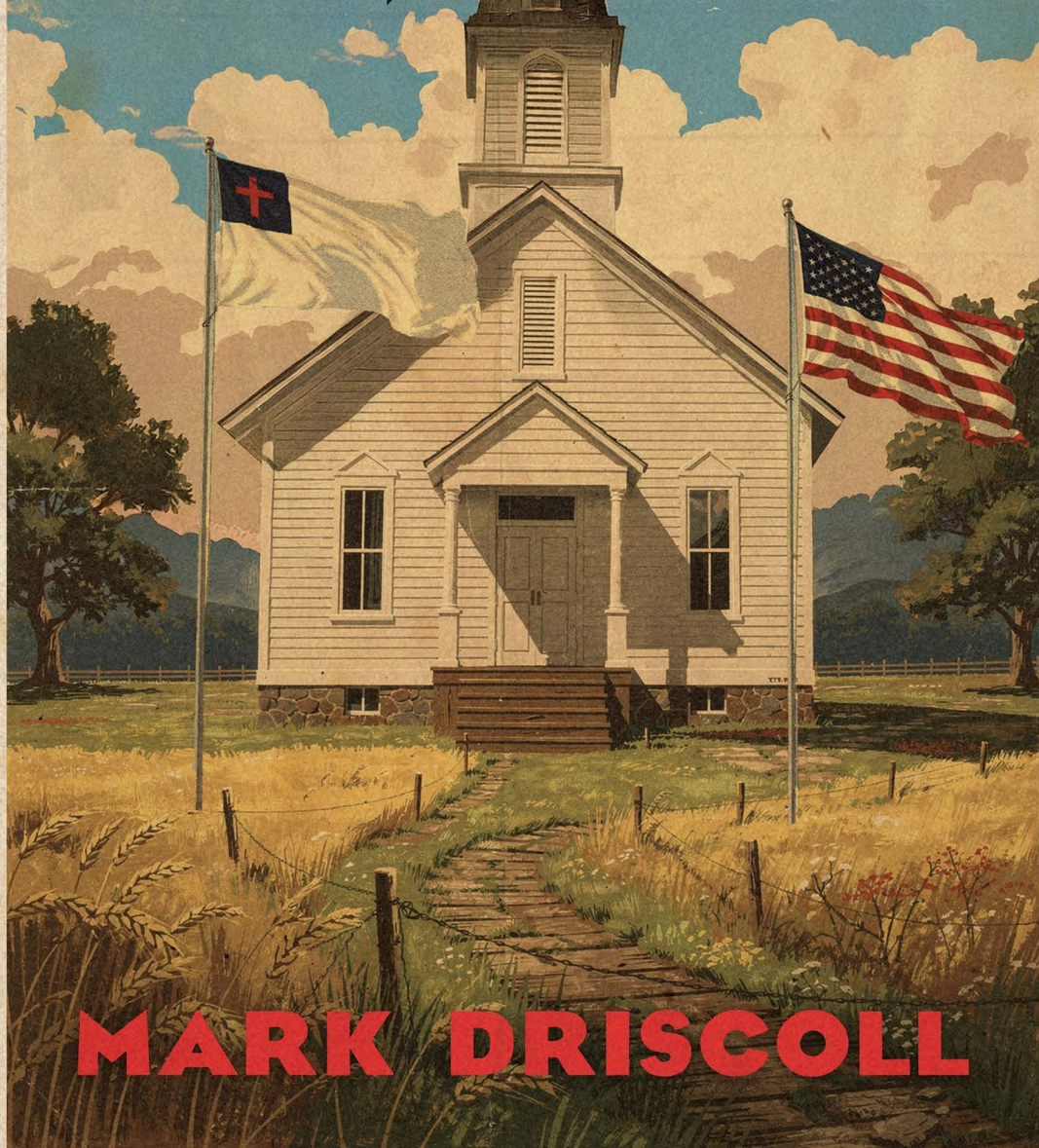


The Biblical Case for
Christian
PATRIOTISM



MARK DRISCOLL

THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

*How to Love Your Country
Without Losing Your Soul*

Mark Driscoll

The Biblical Case for Christian Patriotism: How to Love Your Country
Without Losing Your Soul
© 2026 by Mark Driscoll

ISBN: 978-1-966223-48-1 (Paperback), 978-1-966223-49-8 (E-book)

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

CONTENTS

ABOUT PASTOR MARK & REALFAITH

INTRODUCTION: WHY CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM?

1

CHAPTER 1: STATESMEN BY DESIGN

7

CHAPTER 2: FROM EDEN TO EXODUS

23

CHAPTER 3: LOVING A WICKED NATION

47

CHAPTER 4: TWO KINGDOMS, ONE LORD

65

CHAPTER 5: LOYALTY TO GOD, LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

85

CONCLUSION: THY KINGDOM COME

111

ENDNOTES

117

ABOUT PASTOR MARK & REALFAITH

Pastor Mark is a bold, unapologetic Bible teacher with a master's in theology. He is a sought-after preacher and public speaker and has authored over 60 books and study guides, including popular titles like *New Days Old Demons*, *Act Like a Man*, and *King of Kings*.

Pastor Mark and Grace have served in ministry together since 1993 and have raised five kids who love and serve Jesus. Today, Pastor Mark is the Founding and Senior Pastor of Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, where four generations of his family serve Jesus together. Having become grandparents, they love nothing more than to spend their free time being grandpa and grandma, also known as Bop Bop and Nana.

Pastor Mark and Grace founded RealFaith together with their daughter Ashley in 2016. At RealFaith, it's all about changing lives with practical truth. From best-selling books to viral sermons to in-depth classes and videos, their Bible-based resources help hundreds of millions of people around the globe each year to deepen their faith, love their families, and leave a legacy. If you'd like to learn more, visit **RealFaith.com** or download the **RealFaith+ app**.



If you have any prayer requests or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God's Word, we would love to hear from you at **hello@realfaith.com**.

**THE REMNANT IS A COMMUNITY
OF THE FAITHFUL FEW WHO
REFUSE TO BOW TO CULTURE.**

**BE PART OF THE GLOBAL
MOVEMENT THAT WILL IMPACT
GENERATIONS.**

SCAN BELOW TO JOIN.



INTRODUCTION

WHY CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM?

Every four years, something strange and wonderful happens in living rooms and sports bars all over the world. The World Cup begins, and suddenly everyone remembers they belong to a nation. Jerseys come out in national colors. Anthems are sung off-key and with real tears. Flags are painted on faces. For a few weeks, patriotism isn't just acceptable. It's expected.

The same thing happens during the Olympics. At the World Baseball Classic. Nobody accuses the Brazilian fan of bigotry for loving Brazil. Nobody accuses the German fan of xenophobia for loving Germany.

But there's one nation on earth that gets told—repeatedly and insistently—that this same impulse of loving your own country is something to be ashamed of: the United States of America. In recent years, mainstream media outlets have published, on average, something like six articles a day on the supposed dangers of “Christian nationalism.” Almost all of them are negative. The implied message to ordinary believers is simple: if you love Jesus and you love your country, you're part of the problem.

This book argues the opposite. Loving God and loving your country aren't competing loyalties. They're a single, coherent way of living under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And I'm not making that case from cable news or political theory; I'm making it from Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation and all through the Gospels, the Prophets, and the writings of Peter and Paul.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT

What I'm not asking you to do is worship America or any other nation.

The United States isn't beyond criticism, and I don't believe we should rubber-stamp every decision a government makes just because it's our nation or its leaders represent our political party. Scripture is clear: governments can be just, or they can be unjust. Proverbs 14:34 says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” The Church's job is always to be the moral conscience of the nation, calling it to repentance when it

dishonors God. The Church cannot do its job unless it pays attention to and is involved in the government.

This also isn't a book about partisan politics like which candidate to vote for or which party to join. It's a book about a Bible-based worldview. A way of reading all of reality through the lens of Scripture, instead of reading Scripture through the lens of whatever the culture currently finds acceptable. Paul described the work as taking "every thought captive to obey Christ..."^a Every thought—not just the ones that feel like Scripture should apply to them.

Here's the conviction driving every chapter: if God's Word speaks to something, then God's people need to speak about it too, starting in the pulpit. And God's Word speaks about nations, governments, borders, citizenship, and civil authority a lot more than many modern Christians have been led to believe because too many pastors preach too little Bible.

YOU DIDN'T PICK YOUR COUNTRY. GOD DID.

The word that threads this whole book together is *statesmanship*—loving your country the way God wants you to love it. Chapter 1 unpacks what that means in full. For now, start with the piece of it that most people have never considered: a statesman is someone who says, "Though my citizenship is in Heaven, I am also a resident of this nation, and I want to answer Jesus' own prayer—*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*^b—right here, in the place where God has sovereignly placed me."

That last phrase matters. God "determined allotted periods and the boundaries" of every nation and "the times and places" in which every person would live.^c Nobody's citizenship is an accident. If you were born an American, a Canadian, a Kenyan, or a Brazilian, that wasn't geographic luck. That was the sovereign choice of the God who "made from one man every nation of mankind."

You did not choose your country. God chose it for you.

And if you love God, you love the will of God, which means loving, serving, and seeking the welfare of the nation where He placed you, without ever pretending that nation is your ultimate home. Hebrews puts the tension in a single sentence: "...here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."^d

^a 2 Corinthians 10:5 ^b Matthew 6:10, KJV ^c Acts 17:26 ^d Hebrews 13:14

WHY THIS ARGUMENT MATTERS NOW

Is a book like this even necessary?

Some readers will wonder whether the relationship between faith and country is really so contested that it requires five chapters and a conclusion to sort out. Here's the honest answer: the cultural moment in which this book was written makes the argument more necessary, not less. Younger Americans show declining confidence not just in the nation's institutions but in the legitimacy of national identity itself alongside rising openness to Marxist political and economic ideologies that Chapter 5 will argue are fundamentally incompatible with loving your neighbor. Meanwhile, many churches have grown reluctant to speak to any of this at all, retreating into a narrowly defined spirituality that addresses the individual heart while remaining silent about the individual's obligations as a citizen, a neighbor, and a steward of the culture God has placed them in. Jesus is Lord of your heart, but His Lordship extends from there to everyone, everywhere, and everything. If Christ is not Lord over all, He is not Lord at all.

This retreat from avoiding the exhausting and frustrating flawed world of politics is often well-intentioned. Pastors and churches, wary of political division, understandably want to keep the focus on the gospel rather than on partisan controversy to reach people for Christ, whatever their political preference might be. Fair enough. But there's a difference between avoiding partisan skirmishes and avoiding Scripture's own teaching on government, nationhood, and civic responsibility. Too often, the first has quietly become an excuse for the second. This silence isn't neutral. It's a message. And the message it sends is that God's Word has nothing to say about some of the most consequential questions a citizen will ever face.

That message is false, and this book exists to correct it. An older generation of pastors is responsible for seeker-sensitive "third way" Christianity that encouraged straddling the fence to reach the lost. Jesus' Church is not first and foremost for the lost. It is firstly for God, then for God's people, and lastly for lost people to come and see the countercultural life in the Spirit only available through repentance of sin and faith in Christ Jesus. By placing lost people instead of God at the center of local churches, we have subtly but significantly become God-insensitive to be seeker-sensitive. Christianity is not a series of goods and services to be marketed to consumers in ways that they find inoffensive, acceptable, and convenient. The Bible has a lot to say about the cross of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing." Romans 9:33 says the gospel is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense..." 1 Peter 2:8 echoes the same. Galatians 5:11 speaks of "the offense of the cross..." 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the

Spirit of God, for they are folly to him...”

Jesus also repeatedly said people were “offended by me,”^a as the crowds “took offense at him.”^b On one occasion, Jesus went from a crowd of thousands to only the disciples after they heard his sermon that turned a mega-church into a small group.^c

The point? Accurate Bible teaching focused on Christ is controversial.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

You’ll notice certain themes recur across multiple chapters in this book: the story of Babel, the concept of statesmanship, and the conviction that God determines the nation and era into which every person is born. That’s intentional, not an oversight. Each chapter approaches these themes from a different angle and applies them to a different question, and encountering them again and again, in different contexts, is part of how the whole argument is meant to take root.

Work through the chapters in order if you can; each one builds on convictions established before it. But every chapter also stands reasonably well on its own, if you want to come back later for a specific theme: the theology of nationhood, the pattern of a wicked culture, the relationship between church and state, or what it actually looks like to love your neighbor.

DON’T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

Every claim in this book is anchored in specific biblical texts, cited throughout, so you can check my argument against Scripture yourself instead of taking my word for it. Where I also draw on American history, like the Declaration of Independence, the design of the national seal, the story of the Pilgrims, and the text of constitutional amendments, those claims come not from popular myth or partisan retelling. In Chapters 2 and 4, especially, I make a deliberate effort to separate what America’s founding documents actually say from what popular culture assumes they say. The distinction matters more than you’d think, once you look at the actual texts.

Chapter 5 also takes on a specific modern ideology directly: Marxism, in its various contemporary forms. That treatment is more pointed and extensively argued than anything else in this book, so it deserves a word of explanation up front. I’m not picking on Marxism because it’s uniquely deserving of criticism among political philosophies. I’m picking on it because it’s the clearest historical counterexample to everything this book defends: a

^a Matthew 11:6; Luke 7:23 ^b Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:3 ^c John 6:60–66

vision of family, property, faith, and human dignity built on the conviction that people belong to God, not to the state. Marxism promised liberation. What it delivered, wherever it's been tried, is some of the deadliest regimes in recorded history. Chapter 5 makes that case in detail, with sources quoted directly, so you can weigh the evidence yourself.

Taken together, these five chapters make one sustained argument: the God of the Bible is not silent on nationhood, government, citizenship, and civic love. And a Christian who loves Jesus Christ has every reason and every biblical mandate to love their country, too.

CHAPTER 1

STATESMEN BY DESIGN

A NATION AFRAID TO LOVE ITSELF

Watch the World Cup or the Olympics, and you will see patriotism on full, unashamed display. Every flag is waved. Every anthem is sung with tears. Every fan is convinced, at least for 90 minutes, that their nation is the greatest on earth—and nobody thinks less of them for it. Loving your country is one of the most universally accepted human instincts there is.

Except in one particular country. American Christians who love both Jesus and their nation are regularly told they represent a danger: that “Christian nationalism” is a growing menace, that love of country and love of God cannot coexist without curdling into something ugly. This book takes the opposite position. And it does so not from talk radio or political theory, but from the pages of Scripture: there is a biblical case for Christian patriotism. If you love God, and you love your country, you love your country in obedience to your God. This chapter will begin proving that claim from the book of Genesis, and it starts with a single word: *statesmanship*.

A STATESMAN ISN'T A POLITICIAN

What is statesmanship?

It's loving your country the way your God wants you to love your country. Godly statesmanship means filling the world with a culture that glorifies God and blesses others by exercising dominion in every area of life under the lordship of Christ. The reasoning is straightforward for anyone who takes the Bible seriously. God made everyone and everything. God rules over everyone and everything. God alone knows how everyone and everything should operate and be blessed, and all of that wisdom is contained in His Word.

So, the aim of the Christian life is simple: obedience to God produces blessing for people. And if that's true for individuals, it's true for nations too. If you live in a country, you want that country to be blessed. That's

the whole aim of this book: helping Christians become good statesmen. Scripture has a name for this assignment. It is called the *cultural mandate*, and it appears on the very first page of the Bible.

A POLITICAL KINGDOM WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT

A common objection this book will likely encounter from well-meaning believers is the insistence that faith should remain entirely private, entirely personal, and entirely disconnected from anything resembling politics. That is called dualism, an ancient pagan Greek philosophy that despised the external physical world and only cared about the internal spiritual world of thoughts and feelings. That worldview is antithetical to the Bible, where our spiritual God took upon human flesh and entered the physical world.

Consider what it actually means to confess, as every Christian does, that Jesus Christ is alive right now, seated on a throne, ruling as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over every nation, every ruler, and every era. That's not, and has never been, a merely private or spiritual claim. It's a political claim: a claim about ultimate sovereignty, ultimate authority, and ultimate allegiance, made in direct competition with every other claim to sovereignty a nation's rulers might wish to make for themselves.

The early Church understood this instinctively, which is part of why "Jesus is Lord" became such a dangerous confession under a Roman Empire that insisted "Caesar is Lord." To walk up to a first-century Roman citizen and announce, "I want to tell you about my King, and His Kingdom," was to invite exactly the political conversation modern believers are sometimes told to avoid.

Christ's Kingship was never confined to the human heart, however important that dimension of His reign is. There's no square inch of creation outside His dominion, no nation exempted from His authority, and no ruler who reigns apart from His sovereign permission. To insist that believers should discuss the lordship of Christ only in private, spiritual terms while remaining silent about what that lordship means for nations, governments, and cultures is to shrink a cosmic confession down to something safer than what the New Testament actually claims.

This chapter's entire argument—that God is not silent about nations, borders, and government—flows directly from this foundational confession: if Christ truly reigns over all things, then no sphere of human life, including the political one, falls outside the reach of what it means to submit to His lordship.

ADAM WASN'T JUST A GARDENER

Adam was the first statesman. He was the first person placed in a position of leadership. Genesis 1:28 records God's charge to him: "...God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Marriage, children, cultivation of the earth, and dominion over creation are the assignments given to the first human beings in the garden.

God looked at Adam and, in effect, said, *You're the first statesman. You're the first head of household and leader. You and your wife will have children. Those children will have children. We are going to fill the whole planet with people and culture.*

At this stage in the story, notice what does not yet exist: civil government. No courts. No police. No border patrol. Everyone is living under God's direct authority and obedience. When everyone obeys God, there's no need for the state to compel obedience. Civil government isn't part of God's original design for a perfect world; it's a response to sin along with doctors and funerals.

WHY THE CULTURAL MANDATE BEGINS WITH MARRIAGE

The specific content of the cultural mandate matters, because the sequence God establishes in Genesis 1 and 2 is not incidental. Dominion over the earth doesn't begin with a political program or a strategy for exercising influence. It begins with marriage and with children. "Be fruitful and multiply" precedes "fill the earth and subdue it"; the household comes before the civilization, because the family is the civilization's first and most basic building block. A man who marries, provides for his wife, and raises children to know and love God isn't doing something separate from the work of dominion. He's doing the foundational version of it. Every nation that has ever existed, however large or complex its later political institutions became, began as a collection of households, each one raising the next generation of citizens, workers, worshipers, and, when God calls them to it, statesmen.

This is why so much of Scripture's instruction regarding civilization returns, again and again, to the health of marriage and family rather than to political theory. A generation of young men who are demotivated, absent from the workforce, and disconnected from any sense of responsibility toward a wife and children will not build strong nations, no matter how sound that nation's laws or institutions might otherwise be. A generation that treats children as a burden to be avoided or aborted, rather than a blessing to be welcomed, will not sustain itself into the future, regardless of

its technological or economic achievements.

The cultural mandate isn't merely ancient advice for an agrarian society. It's the actual engine that has produced every flourishing civilization in human history—and its absence is enough, on its own, to explain the slow decline of civilizations that once seemed unshakeable.

DOMINION BEYOND THE GARDEN

Modern readers can sometimes misread “subdue the earth and have dominion” as language confined to agriculture and animal husbandry—it's appropriate enough for Adam's original garden assignment but seemingly remote from a modern reader's actual life in an office, a classroom, a hospital, or a courtroom. That reading sells the cultural mandate short.

Dominion, biblically understood, describes the entire scope of human creativity and stewardship exercised under God's authority—it's not merely tilling soil, but building institutions, creating art, developing technology, forming laws, educating children, healing the sick, and administering justice. Every one of these activities is an expression of the same basic assignment given to Adam in the garden: take what God has made, and what God has given you the capacity to do with it, and use it to bless rather than to exploit, to build rather than to destroy.

This broader reading of dominion is what makes the entire argument of this book possible. If dominion applied only to farming, a book about statesmanship, nationhood, and civic engagement would have little to do with the opening chapters of Genesis. But because dominion describes the full range of human stewardship and creativity, exercised under the lordship of Christ, it directly implicates every sphere this book goes on to discuss: government, law, education, economics, and civic life. A Christian who serves faithfully on a school board, practices law with integrity, teaches history accurately, or governs a city justly isn't stepping outside the boundaries of biblical faithfulness into some separate, secular category called “politics.” They're exercising dominion in exactly the sense Genesis 1:28 describes in the specific sphere where God has placed them.

This is precisely why I keep insisting, again and again, that everything is ultimately biblical. This isn't because Scripture addresses every specific policy question by name, but because Scripture establishes the underlying mandate that every sphere of human life, without exception, falls under.

THE AUTHORITY ADAM GAVE AWAY

Everything changes in Genesis 3. Sin enters the world, and with it comes an entirely different account of how power operates on earth. To

understand it, we have to look ahead to Revelation 12:7–9, which tells the backstory:

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon...And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Here's the picture that Scripture gives us: God is a King, and He has a Kingdom. Jesus Christ is the King of Kings, ruling over a Kingdom that stands over every other kingdom on earth. One of God's created beings rebelled against that authority. Satan, along with a company of demons, determined to dethrone Jesus and seize sovereign authority for himself.

There are, in the end, only two ways to build a culture: you either build it under God, or you steal it from Him. God built the world. Satan chose to steal it. He lost his war in Heaven and was cast down to earth—but the sin of Adam handed him exactly the opening he needed. When Adam, the human race's appointed statesman, sinned against God, he effectively transferred his derivative authority to the Enemy. The war Satan lost in Heaven, he then began winning on earth.

The apostle Paul describes the result in 2 Corinthians 4:4, calling Satan “the god of this world” who has “blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Satan and his demons aren't symbolic. They're real, and they're at work in the world, blinding minds and deceiving nations. Behind the war we can see—the destruction of human life, the theft of private property, the erosion of religious liberty—is a war we cannot see, one that is “not...against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”^a

This is the moment civil government becomes necessary. Once people are no longer living in obedience to God, once they're sinners by nature and choice, they will do evil unless some restraining authority rises up to check them. That's why we now need police officers, courts, judges, and even the death penalty. Civil government exists because sin exists. It is a mercy, not an accident. Evil never stops itself.

^a Ephesians 6:12

BABEL: THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT GLOBALISM

The story of the Bible is the story of human history, and nowhere is that clearer than in Genesis 11, the account of the Tower of Babel. This passage is the interpretive key to nearly everything else in this book, so it deserves careful attention. Genesis 11:1-4 says,

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.”...Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

When Genesis 11:2 says, “people migrated from the east,” it reveals rebellious people who are publicly defying God. As one Bible scholar says,

The details about migration and settlement (11:2) are no small matter. Earlier in Genesis, God judged humanity by expelling them eastward from the land. He expelled Adam and Eve in that direction (3:24), and Cain, too (4:16). But here the people are moving back west (from the east), reversing the judgment (11:2). Their settlement in the valley also reverses another divine action: God’s command to fill the earth, which He gave to Adam and Eve (1:28), and to Noah (9:1).¹

The name Babel itself carries the weight of the story. In ancient Akkadian, it can mean “the gateway to demons,” a portal through which spiritual powers were invited to rule over the nation. In ancient Hebrew, it denotes confusion, which is where the English word “babble” comes from. Both meanings describe exactly what happens next:

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower...And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.^a

^a Genesis 11:5-8

This is the first attempt at civil government in human history, and it's critical to notice *what kind* of government it was: not a collection of distinct nations, but one people, one language, one global authority. In other words, the very first human government was an attempt at globalism, not nationalism—and God judged it. He confused the languages of the builders and scattered them across the earth, and in doing so, He created the nations. Land, language, and heritage: these became, by God's own design, the building blocks of a country.

This same location and spirit reappear roughly 1,500 years later, when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar rises up, enslaves God's people, and demands to be worshiped as a god...in the very same place! That recurrence is not coincidental. Scripture uses this pattern often enough that it's worth naming: *new days, old demons*. When you observe the same behavior surfacing in different times, different places, and different peoples, the constant isn't the culture; it's the spiritual force behind it. The spirit of Babylon is not confined to ancient Iraq. It's a recurring demonic political spirit, one that appears throughout Scripture from Genesis all the way to Revelation, always doing the same basic thing: rejecting the true God, seeking to erase national boundaries, and pursuing centralized, godless power over as many people as possible.

IS GOD PRO-NATIONALISM OR PRO-GLOBALISM?

Genesis 11 answers this question directly. Humanity's first attempt at unified, borderless, global government was judged and dismantled by God Himself, and in its place, God established the pattern of distinct nations, each with its own land and language. The passage even includes what scholars call the Table of Nations, a genealogical record explaining how God organized humanity into distinct peoples and territories. Sinners chose globalism; God chose nationalism.

Land with borders, language, and a shared culture: that's what makes a nation, and it was God's idea. Any nation that refuses to protect its borders, or that abandons a common language and shared heritage, will not remain a nation for long. That is not a partisan opinion. It's simply how God structured the world and its nations after Babel.

It's worth pausing here to distinguish three terms that get used loosely in modern political debate: isolationism, nationalism, and globalism.

Isolationism is the foreign policy stance that a nation should minimize, or altogether avoid, its involvement in other countries' affairs, avoiding alliances and entangling commitments in order to focus entirely on its own domestic concerns. North Korea is the modern example: a nation so isolated that its own citizens often do not know what is happening beyond their

borders. It is a state-cult.

Nationalism, properly defined, is the conviction that a nation should govern its own affairs, free from outside control, prioritizing its own people's interests, identity, and sovereignty while still engaging with the rest of the world. This doesn't mean hatred of other nations any more than loving your own mother means hating everyone else's mother. Two people can each believe their own mother is the best mother in the world without needing to settle the matter by combat. In the same way, an American can love America and a Kenyan can love Kenya, and neither has to hate the other's country to do so.

Globalism is the ideology that many problems cross national borders and are therefore best addressed through international cooperation, integration, and shared global institutions rather than by nations acting independently. This is precisely what was attempted—and judged—at Babel. It's the conviction that humanity's problems can be solved if we all simply set aside our differences and unite under a single global authority. The problem is, we are sinners. When sinners all work together, they are more efficient and more evil.

Genesis 11 settles the question: God's answer is "no" to globalism and "yes" to nationalism. The spirit driving the builders of Babel is the same spirit that drives every subsequent attempt at centralized, borderless, global control, and it's worth stating plainly that this spirit, whatever form it takes in a given generation, is opposed to God's revealed design.

GLOBALISM, IN ITS OWN WORDS

The ambition to dissolve national boundaries isn't a recent development, and its advocates have rarely been shy about stating it. Atheists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels named the target directly in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, a full century before "globalism" entered common usage: "The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country...National differences and antagonism between peoples are daily more and more vanishing."²

Notice what's being described as progress: the vanishing of national distinctions. Not as a regrettable side effect of some other goal, but as the goal itself.

Over a century later, the *Humanist Manifesto II*, published in 1973, states the same ambition with a theology attached. The 17-point statement by atheistic humanists Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson was written as an update to the original *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933 and was a complete rejection of deism, theism, Heaven, and Hell. This document also encouraged unrestricted things like abortion, divorce, contraception, and

“death with dignity” (e.g., euthanasia and suicide).

The preamble says, “The ultimate goal should be the fulfillment of the potential for growth in each human personality—not for the favored few, but for all of humankind. Only a shared world and global measures will suffice,” and the first affirmation goes on to say, “...humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”³ Its 12th affirmation goes further, saying,

We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds... the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move towards the building of a world community... Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government. This would appreciate cultural pluralism and diversity... For the first time in human history, no part of humankind can be isolated from any other. Each person's future is in some way linked to all. We thus reaffirm a commitment to the building of world community...⁴

The document concludes,

At the present juncture of history, commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable; it transcends the narrow allegiances of church, state, party, class, or race in moving towards a wider vision of human potentiality. What more daring a goal for humankind than for each to become, in ideal as well as practice, a citizen of a world community.⁵

Two things about these documents are worth naming plainly.

First, it confirms what I've argued from Genesis 11 onward: the ambition to erase national sovereignty and unite humanity under a single global system of governance is not a religiously neutral policy preference. It is, by its own authors' account, an explicitly humanist and atheistic secular project, built on the premise that no divine rescue is coming and that humanity must therefore engineer its own salvation through centralized global cooperation. To say it simply, Jesus is not coming to save the world, so we good people can work together to be its Savior.

Second, sit for a moment with what such a system would actually mean in practice. A genuinely global government would, by definition, place decisions about a nation's own property, its own children, its own churches, and its own resources into the hands of other nations and other peoples, including nations governed by ideologies fundamentally hostile to the biblical convictions this book defends. A hypothetical world government

answerable equally to every current regime on earth is not a guarantee of peace and flourishing. It's a guarantee that the most tyrannical voices in that system will have at least as much say over your family, your worship, and your future as the most just ones.

WHAT HAPPENS IF BABEL EVER SUCCEEDS

What would actually happen if a globalist project like the one described above ever fully succeeded? What if the nations of the earth genuinely surrendered their sovereignty to a single unified government, exactly as Genesis 11 describes humanity attempting and God interrupting? Scripture answers this directly, under the heading of eschatology: the study of how history will conclude, including Christ's return, the final judgment, and the establishment of His eternal Kingdom.

Paul describes the culmination of this trajectory in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, warning that a final rebellion will be marked by the appearance of a singular "man of lawlessness," who "opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." Read against everything I've argued so far, the picture becomes unmistakable: if the nations of the earth ever do achieve the kind of unified global government this chapter has traced from Babel forward, the text implies a singular figure will rise to occupy its leadership, not merely as a political administrator, but as an object of worship, ruling simultaneously as a god over the government. This is the exact same ambition Satan showed in his original rebellion: to be enthroned, to be worshiped, and to hold total dominion, politically and spiritually, over all creation. Having lost that war in Heaven, Scripture's own account of the last days suggests this ambition finds its final, temporary fulfillment on earth, through a human figure who embodies it completely.

This is why Scripture never presents a functioning, unified world government as a utopian achievement to be celebrated, however much contemporary rhetoric might frame global unity in exactly those terms. What's being described isn't liberty. It's the opposite: total centralized control (political, economic, spiritual, and informational) exercised by a single figure over the entire earth. A world in which one person controls every one of those levers simultaneously isn't paradise achieved. It's Hell arriving early.

That's also why the New Testament frames the coming of this figure not as a surprising deviation from history's pattern but as its logical, albeit tragic, culmination; the same deceptive spirit already at work in the world, John writes, is "the spirit of the antichrist,"^a operating in exactly the same denial

^a 1 John 4:3

of any divine rescue we just saw in the *Humanist Manifesto*'s own stated premises. None of this is meant to make you panic. Scripture is equally clear, as the next chapter will show, that this same story ends with Christ's return and the final judgment of every false claimant to His throne. But it's a sober reminder: the ambition for centralized global governance is not a religiously neutral administrative preference. It's the oldest ambition in the universe, dressed in whatever century's language happens to be fashionable.

MISSIONARIES, NOT POLITICIANS

None of this is a case for isolationism or indifference toward other nations. Christians are commanded by Jesus Himself, in one of His final instructions before ascending to Heaven, to "[g]o therefore and make disciples of all nations."^a The way Christians engage the nations of the world has never primarily been political; it's been evangelistic. This is why the Christian movement, across 2,000 years, has translated more languages, created more written alphabets for previously unwritten languages, and sent more missionaries, medical relief, food, and orphan care to more nations than any other movement in human history.

The conviction driving all of that generosity isn't that political solutions will save the world. It's that spiritual ones will. If a nation has strong, Bible-believing, gospel-preaching, Spirit-filled churches, that nation will be blessed, because blessing follows God's people. Jesus described His Church as salt: a substance that does not eliminate corruption but slows and preserves against it. A nation full of sin is a nation that's dying. The presence of the Church within it is what preserves it from complete decay. A hunter will tell you that if you get a kill, you have to preserve the meat; otherwise, it will rot quickly. Salt slows the deterioration process. The world is literally rotting and decaying. The more that Christians are out of the salt shaker and into the culture, the slower the decline will be. Conversely, when Christians retreat from the public sphere to stay in the salt shaker of the Church, the rot and decay accelerate, which is not loving our God or neighbor.

MODERN ATTEMPTS AT BABEL

History since Genesis 11 offers a long and sobering catalogue of attempts to rebuild what God dismantled at Shinar, and the 20th century alone supplies several vivid examples worth naming. The two world wars, whatever their proximate causes, both produced coalitions (the Axis and Allied powers) organized around the ambition of one nation or ideology

^a Matthew 28:19

extending its authority over vast swaths of the globe. In the aftermath, a wave of new international institutions emerged explicitly designed to coordinate global affairs beyond the authority of any single nation: the United Nations and its Security Council, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and a series of economic bodies (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and regional trade arrangements such as the European Union) all built on the premise that humanity's problems are best solved through ever-larger, ever-more-centralized cooperative government structures.

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic offered a particularly vivid case study: intense pressure was placed on individual nations to surrender elements of their sovereignty to global health authorities, all justified by an appeal to fear. Scripture is direct here: "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."^a And a spirit of fear is precisely the tool that has historically driven people to surrender their liberty to centralized and unaccountable power. The pattern is old even when the headlines are new.

None of this means international cooperation is inherently wicked or that trade agreements and defense alliances between sovereign nations are automatically suspect. Nations can and should cooperate, trade, and even defend one another without surrendering their fundamental sovereignty; that, after all, is a description of alliance, not of Babel. The concern here is narrower and more specific: it's the ambition, wherever it appears, to erase the very category of the sovereign nation altogether, replacing accountable, locally rooted governance with centralized authority that answers to no single electorate and can be removed by no single nation's vote. That ambition, not international cooperation as such, is what Genesis 11 identifies as spiritually dangerous, because it recreates the precise conditions God judged at Babel: humanity united under a single authority, unaccountable to any of its constituent parts, and confident that its own unity is sufficient to solve problems that are, at their root, spiritual rather than administrative.

THE REVERSAL AT PENTECOST

Genesis 11 is not, however, the final word on the confusion of languages. The book of Acts records a remarkable moment that functions almost as a preview of what will one day be fully realized when Christ returns. At Pentecost, "divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance"^b and people "from every nation under heaven" heard the gospel proclaimed, each in their

^a 2 Timothy 1:7 ^b Acts 2:3-4

own native language.^a

For the first time since Babel, the confusion of languages was overcome not by human government and not by force, but by the Holy Spirit, poured out on people who were under the lordship of Christ. This is the pattern: you can never build a government large enough to restrain all human sin. What's required is the Holy Spirit, transforming and restraining sinners from within. The Church, wherever it is under the lordship of Christ and filled with the Spirit, is the place where the curse of Babel begins to be undone—not perfectly, not yet, but genuinely, in the sense that people who were once divided by language and nation can now communicate, live together, and build together, because they are being saved and are in the process of sanctification. The only hope for people and nations is surrendering to the total Lordship of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE FINAL REVERSAL: EVERY NATION, UNDER CHRIST

Scripture takes this trajectory all the way to its conclusion. Revelation 7:9 describes the scene at the return of Christ: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes...” This is the moment globalism finally works—not because human beings finally figured out how to unite themselves, but because every nation, tribe, people, and language will forever be gathered under the Lordship of Christ, with sin, Satan, and the curse all abolished. Until that day, any attempt to build unity without submission to Christ will end not in utopia but in the same destructive pattern Genesis 11 describes.

Until Christ returns, the biblical mandate for God's people is dual: reach the nations and love your own nation. Deuteronomy 32:8 says that “[w]hen the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples...” This is a direct commentary on Genesis 11: when God created nations, He fixed their borders. The Apostle Paul makes essentially the same point in Acts 17:26, teaching that God made “from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place...”

A MISSIONARY TO YOUR OWN NATION

This has deeply personal implications. If God determines the nation

^a Acts 2:5-8

and the era into which every person is born, then no one's citizenship or birthday is accidental. Wherever and whenever you were born, you were sent there as a missionary; you were called to be a good citizen and a good statesman, to preach the gospel, and to bring biblical conviction to bear in a way that blesses others and loves your neighbor.

This isn't a reason for shame. It's a reason for gratitude and purpose: to be filled with the Holy Spirit and equipped to carry the Word of God from your nation to the nations of the earth, exercising the freedoms of religion, speech, and assembly not as entitlements to be taken for granted but as gifts from the Father to be stewarded with gladness so that others, watching how you live, might come to know the God who gives every right worth having and who alone can be trusted to preserve it.

LOVING YOUR COUNTRY WITHOUT HATING ANYONE ELSE'S

One objection surfaces almost immediately whenever a Christian says out loud that they love their country: does loving your own nation require you to think less of everyone else's? The logic of the objection assumes that love is a zero-sum resource: that affection given to one thing must be subtracted from another. But that's not how love actually works, biblically or otherwise, and a simple illustration from a fellow pastor makes the point clear.

Imagine two men, each shopping for a Mother's Day card. One picks up a card that reads, "Mom, you're the best mom in the world." The next man picks up an identical card for his own mother. Neither man needs to fight the other in the greeting card aisle to settle whose mother is objectively superior. Both men can sincerely believe their own mother is the best mother in the world, without either belief requiring the other man's mother to be diminished. Loving your own mother more than you love someone else's mother isn't prejudice; it's simply what love, rightly ordered, looks like.

The same logic applies to nations. Loving your own country more than you love another doesn't require hatred of that other country any more than loving your own family requires contempt for your neighbor's family. This is nationalism as this book defines it: love for one's own nation that neither depends upon nor produces hostility toward others.

This distinction also clarifies why nationalism, properly understood, is not the same thing as indifference to the rest of the world and why loving your own country doesn't obligate that country to solve every other country's problems by force. A nation, like a household, has a primary responsibility to put its own families, laws, and defense in order before it can meaningfully help anyone else. This doesn't mean isolation from the world, and it certainly doesn't mean turning away from those who suffer under tyranny elsewhere;

the missionary impulse described earlier in this chapter remains as strong as ever. It does mean recognizing an order of responsibility: just as a father is responsible first for his own household before he can help his neighbor's, a nation is responsible first for its own citizens before it can meaningfully extend help to others.

Every serviceman and servicewoman who has ever sacrificed on behalf of this or any nation deserves honor and gratitude for that sacrifice, but honoring that sacrifice is not the same thing as believing a nation exists primarily to solve problems that other nations have created for themselves. Nations, like families, ultimately bear responsibility for governing themselves well.

FROM EDEN TO BABEL TO PENTECOST

Before this chapter closes, it's worth returning to the observation made earlier about the two ways a culture can be built: you either build it, or you steal it. This distinction runs through the entire storyline traced across this chapter, and it will resurface again in later chapters under different names: capitalism and socialism, ownership and collectivism, and stewardship and confiscation.

The pattern established at creation is that dominion is exercised through building: cultivating, creating, multiplying, and stewarding what God has given. The pattern introduced by the Fall—and perfected at Babel—is the opposite: seizing what belongs to another, centralizing power that was never meant to be centralized, and calling the result unity.

Every chapter that follows will, in one way or another, be asking the same question this chapter has asked first: *Is a given ideology, movement, or policy an expression of godly building, or an expression of Babel's original theft?*

CHAPTER 2

FROM EDEN TO EXODUS

EVERYTHING IS BIBLICAL

Most pastors today don't talk enough about anything political or cultural; they claim to just "preach the Word." It sounds humble, but it's actually haughty. It isn't, in the end, coherent. Open the Bible, and you find it speaking to everything that exists in all of creation. Jesus Christ is alive right now, seated on a throne as King, ruling over a Kingdom with authority and dominion over every nation, every era, and every place—and that is, by definition, political. This brings us back to the conviction driving the entire book: if God's Word speaks to something, God's people need to speak about it too.

I do not come from politics. I do come from the pulpit. My bachelor's degree is in speech. My master's degree is in Bible. I'm a Bible preacher. I have spent over three decades preaching largely verse-by-verse through books of the Bible. Over and over, the backdrop is often godly believers calling nations, governments, and politicians to task. The following is merely a list of prophets in the fight between God and government and does not even include the parade of other believers involved in government service (e.g., Joseph, Daniel, and Nehemiah).

- **Moses**—*Exodus*—Egypt (Pharaoh)
- **Nathan**—*2 Samuel 12*—David's court
- **Gad**—*2 Samuel 24*—David's court
- **Ahijah the Shilonite**—*1 Kings 11, 14*—Jeroboam I and the northern tribes
- **Shemaiah**—*1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 12*—Rehoboam, Judah
- **Jehu son of Hanani**—*1 Kings 16*—Baasha of Israel
- **Elijah**—*1 Kings 18*—Israel under Ahab
- **Micaiah son of Imlah**—*1 Kings 22*—Ahab, against 400 court prophets
- **Elisha**—*2 Kings 8*—Israel; also anointed Hazael over Aram
- **Jonah**—*2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 3:5-10*—served Israel under Jeroboam

- II; Nineveh/Assyria
- **Huldah**—*2 Kings 22*—Josiah, Judah
- **Azariah son of Oded**—*2 Chronicles 15*—Asa, Judah
- **Hanani**—*2 Chronicles 16*—Asa, Judah
- **Oded**—*2 Chronicles 28*—the Samaritan army over Judean captives
- **Isaiah**—*Isaiah 1:18*—Judah under Uzziah through Hezekiah
- **Jeremiah**—*Jeremiah 1:5*—Judah, called “prophet to the nations”
- **Ezekiel**—*Ezekiel 18:30–32*—the Judean exiles in Babylon
- **Daniel**—*Daniel 4:27*—Babylon and Persia
- **Hosea**—*Hosea 6:1, 14:1*—Ephraim/Israel
- **Joel**—*Joel 2:12–13*—Judah
- **Amos**—*Amos 5:4*—a Judean sent north to Bethel
- **Obadiah**—*Obadiah 1:1*—Edom
- **Micah**—*Micah 1:1*—Judah and Samaria both
- **Nahum**—*Nahum 1:1*—Nineveh/Assyria
- **Habakkuk**—*Habakkuk 2:12*—Judah
- **Zephaniah**—*Zephaniah 2:1–3*—Judah
- **Haggai**—*Haggai 1:1*—post-exilic Jerusalem
- **Zechariah**—*Zechariah 1:3*—post-exilic Jerusalem
- **Malachi**—*Malachi 3:7*—post-exilic Jerusalem

If you preach the Word, you have to talk about the world. The Bible is not a book we just look at; it’s also a book we look through to interpret and understand everything. The Bible is not an old book that tells us what happened. The Bible is an eternal book that tells us what always happens.

This chapter continues the argument of Chapter 1 by tracing the theme of government, citizenship, statehood, and statesmanship through the books of Genesis and Exodus, showing that these two opening books of the Bible amount to a set of instructions for how God’s people are to live as citizens of nations.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD...

Genesis 1 opens with four words that set the tone for everything that follows in Scripture: “In the beginning, God...” Not “in the beginning, humanity.” The story is God-centered, not man-centered. God pre-exists all creation. Everyone and everything comes from Him.

In Genesis 1 and 2, God makes human beings after making the earth, and He makes them male and female, which are the only two categories the text allows. He brings them together in marriage, and marriage becomes, by God’s design, the foundational building block of civilization. This is why disordering marriage disorders civilization itself. It isn’t a peripheral issue. It’s

a structural one.

God then issues what we discussed in Chapter 1, called the cultural mandate: “Be fruitful and multiply, increase in number, fill the earth, and subdue it.” Marriage, children, provision, and dominion: this is the trajectory God sets for young men and women from the very first pages of Scripture. He said to marry, raise children, provide, protect, and build, and in doing so, direct the strength He has given toward the flourishing of human life and civilization, starting with one’s own household.

TOTAL RUIN IN ONLY SIX CHAPTERS

Genesis 3 records humanity’s rebellion against God. Sin enters, the curse follows, and, as the apostle Paul will later put it in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan becomes “the god of this world,” and everything God made very good becomes very broken.

Here again, civil government becomes necessary. Before sin, there was no need for police, lawyers, judges, borders, prisons, or capital punishment, because everyone obeyed God directly. Once humanity became sinful by nature and by choice—dangerous, capable of horrifying evil, and especially dangerous when working *together* toward evil—civil government became a necessary restraint. Left unchecked, that danger escalates quickly: within a few chapters of Genesis, human wickedness has grown so severe that God floods the entire earth and starts over with a single family.

BABEL’S DEEPER CLAIM

The Genesis 11 account, already discussed in Chapter 1, carries an implication worth drawing out further: What the builders were attempting is called globalism, the conviction that humanity doesn’t need God, that people simply need to unite their efforts.

It’s worth noting how closely this mirrors a certain modern narrative: humanity is fundamentally good, full of untapped potential, and if we’d all simply work together, we could solve our problems and build Heaven on earth without reference to God. Scripture’s response to that narrative is not that the potential claim is entirely false—humanity does have enormous potential—but that apart from the Holy Spirit, that potential cuts both ways. Sinful people working in unity aren’t necessarily working toward good. They may simply be more effective at evil. This is what God Himself says plainly in Genesis 11:6: “And the LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.’” Sinners united together is the problem, not the solution.

FROM JUDGMENT TO PROMISE: GENESIS 11 TO GENESIS 12

Genesis 11 records God's "no" to globalism. Genesis 12 records His "yes" to nation-building. And it begins with a single, elderly, childless man.

Before Abraham enters the story, we are told something important about his family background: Joshua 24:2 records that "Terah, the father of Abraham...served other gods." Abraham's own father may well have been among those attempting to build the very Tower of Babel described in the previous chapter; the man God chose to found a great nation didn't come from a family with a head start in godliness. He came from a pagan, confused, spiritually compromised household, which is itself instructive: God's plan for nationhood does not depend on finding people who already deserve it, but rather on giving sinners grace to be born again and statesmen. That's the story of Abraham. God's call to Abraham could not be more direct:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."^a

This is God saying "no" to globalism and "yes" to nationalism in a single decisive act: choosing one man, promising him a land, a nation, descendants, and a language, all as the beginning of what will eventually become Israel. God sets Israel as the pattern for nation building on the earth.

Notice, too, what precedes the nation: a marriage and a family. Before there is a nation of Israel, there is a husband, a wife, and a child. From Abraham to the book of Exodus (roughly 400 years), that single family multiplies into a nation of a few million people. The building block of any nation isn't politics or government policy. It's marriage and family. Get those right, and a civilization has a future. Get them wrong, and there is nothing to motivate young people toward productivity, nothing to sustain a coming generation, and ultimately, no future at all. You cannot make an omelet without eggs, or a nation without marriage and family.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY AS THE ENGINE BEHIND EVERY NATION

Before turning to Joseph's example of statesmanship, it's worth

^a Genesis 12:1-3

lingering on a point already introduced but easy to miss: the biblical storyline consistently treats marriage and family, not politics, as the true engine behind a nation's future. Notice the order of the narrative from Abraham to Exodus. God doesn't begin by handing Abraham a constitution, a set of national laws, or a governing structure. He begins with a promise to an elderly, barren, childless couple that they will have a son. From that single marriage and that single child, over roughly four centuries, an entire nation of several million people is produced. Politics, government, and law all arrive later in the story; they're downstream of family, not upstream of it.

This ordering carries a pointed challenge for any generation, ancient or modern, that becomes preoccupied with political outcomes while neglecting the health of its own marriages and households. A nation can win every political argument of a given decade and still lose its future if, in the same decade, its young men are not marrying, its young women are not being pursued by men prepared to provide and protect, and its households are not producing and raising the next generation. No government policy, however well-designed, can substitute for what only a healthy marriage and a stable, loving home can supply: the formation of character, conscience, and faith in a child from their earliest years who will grow up to continue the cultural mandate into the future after mom and dad are dead and gone.

The biblical case for statesmanship can't be separated from the biblical case for marriage and family. They're not two separate subjects. They're two expressions of the same underlying conviction: that God's blessing on a nation flows through the ordinary, unglamorous faithfulness of households before it ever reaches the level of policy or law.

GOD DOESN'T WAIT FOR WORTHY CANDIDATES

Abraham's own father served other gods and may well have participated in the very Babel project Genesis 11 describes. This detail is easy to read past quickly, but it carries real theological weight. God's plan to build a nation that would bless every family on earth didn't begin with a search for the most spiritually qualified candidate available. It began with a pagan man from a pagan household in a city devoted to exactly the kind of godless, centralized ambition Genesis 11 had just condemned—and God called him anyway. God transformed him and used his family to become the very nation through which the rest of the world would eventually be blessed through the coming of Christ.

This pattern recurs throughout the biblical storyline, and it matters directly for how a modern reader ought to think about their own nation's founding and future. Nations, like individuals, don't need an unblemished moral history before God can use them, bless them, and work through them.

If God's plan for global blessing could begin with a household implicated in the very rebellion of Babel, using a couple who commits polygamy that ends up in two sons becoming two nations (Jews through Abraham's son Isaac with Sarah and Arabs through Abraham's son Ishmael with Hagar, who continue at war thousands of years later), then no nation's flawed or complicated history disqualifies it from being genuinely used by God going forward; this includes a nation like the United States, whose founding, like every nation's founding, contains both principled commitments to biblical ideals and serious, sometimes grievous failures to live up to them.

The proper response to that complicated reality isn't uncritical celebration, and it isn't wholesale rejection either. It's the same response God modeled with Abraham: a call toward repentance, transformation, and renewed covenant faithfulness, trusting that God is fully capable of building something good out of imperfect material, exactly as He did with Abraham's own compromised household 4,000 years ago.

A MAN OF GOD IN A GODLESS GOVERNMENT

By the end of Genesis, Abraham's family has produced a striking example of what this book calls statesmanship in the person of Joseph. Statesmanship, again, is the conviction articulated by the Apostle Paul: "Our citizenship is in heaven,"^a even while a person's residence is in a particular nation. God determined the times and places in which each person lives;^b therefore, our residence in a given nation is itself part of God's sovereign assignment.

A statesman recognizes that history is ultimately moving toward only two possible destinations: Heaven or Hell. And works, for as long as they remain on earth, to see more of Heaven's culture and less of Hell's take root in the place where God has put them. That is the whole of statesmanship: wanting Christ's Kingdom expressed, revealed, and grown right where you live, for the good of your neighbors. The summary of statesmanship is simple—more Heaven, less Hell—starting where I live.

Joseph, sold into slavery by his own brothers, eventually rises to become second-in-command of Egypt, which was one of the most powerful and most spiritually corrupt governments on earth at the time. Egypt, in the biblical account, functions as a counterfeit of the Kingdom of God: Pharaoh is called a "son of God," a title that belongs rightly only to Christ; the nation is called "the kingdom of Egypt," a shadow-image of the Kingdom of Heaven. And yet, within that counterfeit kingdom, God places a Spirit-filled believer in a position of real governmental authority.

^a Philippians 3:20 ^b Acts 17:26

Pharaoh himself recognizes what makes Joseph different: “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”^a Genesis 39:2-3 makes the same point twice more: “The Lord was with Joseph...” Joseph was in the government, and the Holy Spirit was in Joseph. His presence in government changes everything for everyone around him, not because he seized power through political maneuvering, but because he was filled with the Spirit of God and placed, by God’s providence, in a position to do good.

FROM PRISON TO SECOND IN COMMAND

Joseph’s rise to power begins with a gift most modern readers would consider a curse rather than a blessing: the ability to interpret dreams, which lands him first in prison on a false accusation and only later, remarkably, in front of Pharaoh himself, called up to interpret a dream that has troubled the king and left every demonic court magician and wise man in Egypt without an answer.

Joseph’s interpretation is direct: seven years of abundant harvest will be followed by seven years of severe famine. Egypt must prepare accordingly. What follows isn’t merely a prophetic warning but a fully realized administrative government plan, and Scripture credits Joseph with proposing it himself: “...let Pharaoh select a man discerning and wise...let [him]... appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years...That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine...”^b

Pharaoh’s response is immediate and telling. He doesn’t merely accept the plan; he elevates the man who proposed it to the second-highest position in the entire kingdom, declaring, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command.”^c

Joseph’s governance during the famine years reveals a statesman who used real, coercive governmental authority (e.g., a 20 percent tax, mandatory grain storage, centralized distribution) but who did so for the specific purpose of preserving life during a genuine crisis, not for the accumulation of personal power or the oppression of the people under his authority.

When the famine strikes not only Egypt but the surrounding region, including Joseph’s own estranged family back in Canaan, his brothers—the very men who once sold him into slavery—travel to Egypt to buy grain and stand before their brother without recognizing him. The reconciliation that follows is one of the most moving scenes in the Old Testament. Joseph, weeping, reveals himself to the brothers who betrayed him, and rather than

^a Genesis 41:38 ^b Genesis 41:33-36 ^c Genesis 41:39-40

exacting revenge with the full governmental power now at his disposal, declares, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”^a

This is statesmanship, as this book has defined it from its opening pages: a believer, placed by God’s providence in a position of genuine governmental authority within a pagan nation, who uses that authority not to settle personal scores or accumulate power, but to preserve life, provide for the vulnerable, and ultimately bless people who did not deserve his mercy, his own brothers included. Joseph is one of history’s best men, and God sends him to work in one of history’s worst governments.

FAITHFUL FIRST, POWERFUL SECOND

Joseph didn’t seek power for its own sake, and he didn’t attain his position through political maneuvering, flattery, or compromise of his convictions. He rose to prominence because he remained faithful to God through slavery, false accusation, and imprisonment, and because God gave him wisdom that even a pagan king recognized as coming from a source beyond human origin. This is the pattern Scripture consistently commends: influence that flows from character and Spirit-filled faithfulness rather than influence pursued as an end in itself.

This matters because it answers a common misgiving many believers feel about political and civic engagement: the fear that involvement in government or public life inevitably corrupts or requires compromising one’s convictions to gain a seat at the table. Joseph’s example suggests a different possibility: that faithfulness itself can be the very thing that opens a door to influence, rather than something to be set aside once that door opens. Joseph didn’t become less faithful to God in order to become second-in-command of Egypt; his faithfulness was the reason Pharaoh trusted him with the position in the first place. Statesmanship, rightly practiced, doesn’t ask a believer to trade away their convictions for influence; it asks them to bring the fullness of their convictions into whatever sphere of influence God provides, exactly as Joseph did. Look at the difference one Spirit-filled believer made in serving God by working for a godless government! Imagine how world history would be different if Joseph did not act with integrity as a statesman for the Lord. Untold multitudes of people would have starved to death, including the family line that brought Jesus Christ into human history!

^a Genesis 50:20

EGYPT AS A COUNTERFEIT KINGDOM

The description of Egypt as a counterfeit of the Kingdom of Heaven deserves further reflection, because the same counterfeiting pattern recurs throughout Scripture and offers a useful diagnostic tool for evaluating any government or ideology a believer might encounter. A counterfeit, by definition, isn't something obviously false. It succeeds precisely by imitating the genuine article closely enough to be mistaken for it. Egypt's counterfeit kingdom included many of the outward trappings of legitimate authority: an organized government, a structured economy, and impressive architecture, all wrapped around a ruler's own self-declared divinity. What made Egypt's kingdom a counterfeit rather than a legitimate expression of the authority God delegates to civil government was not the presence of government itself, which Chapter 1 has already established as a necessary and even good response to human sin, but the substitution of a human ruler's self-declared divinity for submission to the true God.

This same counterfeiting pattern reappears throughout Scripture and throughout history: Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar erecting a golden image demanding worship; Rome's emperors claiming the title "Lord" that belongs to Christ alone; and, in every subsequent era, various rulers, movements, and ideologies that borrow the language of ultimate meaning, ultimate loyalty, and ultimate hope—language that rightfully belongs only to the Kingdom of God and King Jesus—and redirect it toward a human institution or human leader instead. Recognizing this pattern equips a believer to ask a useful diagnostic question of any political movement or ideology that presents itself with quasi-religious intensity: does this movement point beyond itself to the true King, or does it, subtly or overtly, ask for the kind of ultimate allegiance that belongs to Him alone? Joseph's story is instructive here precisely because he served faithfully within Egypt's counterfeit kingdom without ever mistaking it for the real one, which is a distinction this book's entire argument depends on maintaining: full, faithful engagement with the nation where God has placed a believer, without ever confusing that nation, however good or however flawed, with the Kingdom that alone deserves final and ultimate loyalty.

WHEN THE STATESMAN IS GONE

Turn the page from Genesis to Exodus, and the contrast is immediate and devastating. "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."^a Whatever influence Joseph's presence had exerted on the

^a Exodus 1:8

government of Egypt is gone, and what follows is a case study in what happens when believers exit the public square entirely: "...they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service..."^a

This isn't a merely political illustration. It's a biblical one, and it should trouble anyone who thinks Christians can simply withdraw from public life without consequence. Whatever else may be true about the proper limits of Christian political engagement, Exodus shows plainly what a nation looks like without any Spirit-filled believer present shaping its government: tyranny, oppression, and the deliberate destruction of human life, starting with believers and babies.

The horror escalates from forced labor to something far worse. Pharaoh instructs the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him..."^b This isn't merely bad policy. It's tyranny in its purest form: one man, acting as though he were God, issuing a death sentence against an entire class of newborns, with no law, no court, and no check on his authority. And behind this decree lies more than politics: the backdrop of the entire book of Exodus is spiritual warfare—a contest between the gods, goddesses, and demonic powers of Egypt and the one true God of Israel.

The problems all started for Egypt when Pharaoh picked a fight with Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible does not like to be mocked, which is exactly what Pharaoh did. Exodus 5:1-2 says, "...Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."' But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.'" Pharaoh had no regard for Jesus Christ, the God of Israel. Jesus decided to show Pharaoh who the true God and Lord was and came to destroy the nation to reveal His glory:

- Exodus 7:3-5 – ...though I multiply my signs and wonders...Pharaoh will not listen...I will...bring...my people...out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD..."
- Exodus 9:14 – ...I will send all my plagues...so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.
- Exodus 12:12 – ...I will pass through the land of Egypt...and I will strike all the firstborn...and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.
- Exodus 14:17-18 – ...I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host,

^a Exodus 1:13-14 ^b Exodus 1:16

his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD...

The entire backdrop of Exodus is God versus government. The power of Egypt was from it being incredibly and overtly demonic. The demons gave to Egypt military power, financial wealth, spiritual authority, sexual pleasure, and creative genius. These were the most demonic and proud people on the earth.

Pharaoh appears in archaeological records with the snake on his crown. It makes us think of the promise in Genesis 3:15, where we read of the enmity between the triumphant seed of the woman over the opposing seed of the serpent. Pharaoh lived out the serpent role by killing boys. Egypt was the enemy of God, and God must deliver Israel so that “they may worship [Him]” (Exod 9:1). This story shows us a cosmic, spiritual battle, not just a battle between Moses and Pharaoh.⁶

The symbol for Egypt from 1600 B.C. to the days of Moses was the serpent, “Ouroboros, meaning ‘Devouring its Own Tail’ or ‘All is One.’”⁷ Literally, the symbol of Satan was the symbol of Egypt—including the pharaoh king-god wearing that image on the top of his head as a sign of demonic dominion over the nation. The Pharaohs who ruled Egypt were worshiped as “son of god, Re,” who was a counterfeit to Christ, considered a god and man who walked between the seen and unseen realms.⁸

The point is simple: why should God’s people exit the public square, including politics, when Satan and demons never will? If evildoers are exercising political power and cultural control, God’s people should seek to do the same out of love for God and neighbor as Jesus commands.

What caused God’s anger to turn into wrath against the nation of Egypt? God declared war on Egypt because that government was denying life and liberty. These two issues must be the commitments of believers because they are the priorities of God. Once the government decided to hate life by killing babies and take away liberty by enslaving people and forbidding them to worship freely, God’s wrath ensued. Importantly, God chooses to work through a statesman.

BORN UNDER A DEATH SENTENCE

The statesman God raises up to confront this tyranny enters the story under circumstances that make his own survival, let alone his eventual leadership, almost impossible to imagine. Exodus 2 records his birth plainly: a Levite couple has a son who is born directly into the shadow of Pharaoh’s

decree that every male Hebrew infant be thrown into the Nile, which was worshiped as the transgender demon-god Hapi. The ancient issues are still with us today—the government is encouraging the murder of babies and transgenderism. Moses’ mother hides him, and when concealment is no longer possible, she does something that reads almost as an act of desperate faith rather than mere survival instinct; she places him in a basket coated with tar and pitch and sets him adrift on the very river Pharaoh had ordered used as an instrument of death, trusting God with what she could no longer control herself.

Had Pharaoh’s decree succeeded against this one particular child, there would have been no one to confront Pharaoh, no one to lead the exodus, no lawgiver to receive the 10 Commandments at Sinai, and, by natural extension, an entirely different trajectory for the rest of the biblical storyline and human history. There would be no Israel, no Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament), and no descendants of Abraham through which Jesus Christ could be born. Moses survives only because his parents refused to comply with an unjust decree—an act of quiet civil disobedience, long before Scripture ever uses that language explicitly—and because Pharaoh’s own daughter, discovering the basket while bathing in the river, chooses compassion over her father’s policy and raises the child in the very palace that had ordered his death.

Moses’ formal call to leadership comes decades later in a scene that has become one of the most recognizable in all of Scripture: tending sheep in the wilderness, he encounters a bush that burns without being consumed. He hears God identify Himself directly: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...”^a This is the same covenant already traced through this chapter from Genesis 12 forward. God’s stated purpose is direct:

I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters...I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land...^b

The statesman God raises to confront Pharaoh’s tyranny is not a foreign conqueror or a rival political power; he is a member of the very people being oppressed, spared as an infant by an act of quiet defiance, and called, decades later, back into the very palace that had once sought his death, this time to demand his people’s freedom rather than to receive its protection.

^a Exodus 3:6 ^b Exodus 3:7-8

NO LAW. NO COURT. NO CONSCIENCE.

The situation in Exodus was more severe than the familiar story suggests. Its scale is easy to lose in a story so familiar it can become background noise. By some estimates, the nation of Egypt at the time held somewhere between five and six million people, and the enslaved Hebrew population numbered somewhere between two and three million, meaning a significant fraction of the entire population of Egypt existed in a state of forced servitude, under a regime willing to order the killing of newborn boys simply because their numbers had grown inconvenient. The text notes, almost paradoxically, that “the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.”^a Oppression itself, rather than crushing the Hebrew population, only intensified the fear driving Pharaoh’s cruelty, which escalated in turn. As a believer, the principle here is encouraging and hopeful: government oppression leads to godly multiplication.

This is precisely the pattern: a government perceives a population it cannot fully control, responds not with justice but with escalating violence against the most vulnerable members of that population, like infants, and cloaks the whole campaign in the language of necessity and public order. However this pattern echoes into your own moment in history, Scripture’s verdict is clear: this was tyranny in its rawest form, unrestrained by law, court, or conscience, and God’s response to it was to raise up a deliverer, send plagues against the false gods of Egypt one by one, and ultimately destroy the army that pursued His people into the sea. Again, if God is involved in government, then it must be godly for us to join Him.

EGYPT’S INFANTICIDE AND ITS MODERN ECHO

Echoing the themes of Exodus, it’s worth noting that 1973 was a remarkably consequential year in American cultural history on several fronts at once; the same year we removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders, unleashing the sexual revolution without any guardrails, and the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion nationwide⁹, the Endangered Species Act extended federal protection to threatened wildlife.¹⁰ However you land on either policy on its own terms, the juxtaposition is hard to read past: the same cultural moment that encouraged ungodly sex extended new legal protections to endangered animal species and removed longstanding legal protections from unborn children—all in the same year!

Historians estimate Pharaoh’s campaign against Hebrew infants, at its

^a Exodus 1:12

highest plausible estimate, cost as many as 150,000 children their lives. That figure, horrifying on its own terms, is the very atrocity that provoked God to destroy the most powerful nation on earth at the time. Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion throughout the United States, estimates place the number of children lost to abortion in America alone at roughly 66 million—and, tragically, counting—including 24.5 million millennials (those who would’ve been born from 1981-1996), and 26 million Gen Z (those who would’ve been born from 1997-2012). These are the most murdered generations in the history of the world. Set against Pharaoh’s 150,000, the comparison is almost impossible to absorb: 66 million is the equivalent of repeating Pharaoh’s entire campaign against Hebrew infants daily for 440 days in a row.¹¹ It’s a number larger than the combined population of America’s 27 smallest states.¹²

The scale of this comparison deserves sober reflection rather than quick dismissal. If God’s judgment against Egypt was provoked by the taking of life on a scale several hundred times smaller than what has occurred in the United States since 1973, the comparison we’ve already drawn between ancient Egypt and modern nations isn’t a rhetorical flourish. It’s a direct, numerically grounded application of the same “new days, old demons” principle we’ll explore further in the next chapter: the conviction that when the same destructive pattern reappears across history, the constant factor is rarely political ideology and is far more often demonic manifestation.

It’s worth saying again: of the two issues that provoked God’s judgment against Egypt in Exodus—the taking of innocent life and the restriction of religious liberty—both remain live and contested issues in the modern world, and Scripture’s own verdict on both has not changed with the passage of centuries. A God who was moved to destroy a nation over the killing of tens of thousands of children doesn’t become indifferent to the killing of tens of millions simply because the calendar has advanced. Morally, the case for devolution of humanity is easier to make than evolution.

WHAT RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ACTUALLY COSTS

If you’ve spent your entire life in a nation with genuine religious liberty, it may be easy to underestimate how rare that liberty is in the world and how directly its absence connects to the issue I’ve identified at the heart of Exodus: the freedom to worship God without fear of the state. Two brief accounts illustrate what the absence of that liberty actually looks like in practice, in the present day rather than the ancient past.

The first comes from the ancient city of Ephesus, in modern-day Turkey, the very city addressed in the New Testament book that bears its name and one of the seven churches named in Revelation 2 and 3. My

family and I had the opportunity a number of years ago to travel to Turkey, where I was going to preach. I asked to meet the local pastor and was told he wouldn't be coming that day; he'd already been arrested and beaten multiple times for preaching the gospel, and the church's leaders were afraid his presence alongside a visiting American pastor would provoke another arrest. Those same leaders gave my family specific, careful instruction: sit in the back, and do not acknowledge any relation to me. No hugs, no calling me "Dad," nothing to identify them as being with me, because state security police would be seated in the front row, and any statement critical of Islam, Allah, or the nation of Turkey would result in me being arrested and beaten and carry the same consequences for my wife and children. I have preached almost weekly for my entire adult life in America with complete freedom, and one sermon in Turkey put my family and me in grave danger.

The second account is more recent and closer to home in one particular sense. I recently received a text from a pastor friend of mine in Brazil. He said the government had brought a lawsuit against him for hate speech for saying that Islam is wrong. He was now up against the federal government in Brazil for teaching Romans 1. He was also receiving a second set of charges for preaching against abortion. He asked for prayer for him and his family because the government was trying to throw him in jail. This story isn't hypothetical. It's a friend of mine, and his prayer is that he and his family can get to America before he is convicted of crimes and sent to prison, leaving his family and church family without his leadership and love.

Neither of these accounts is offered as hypothetical or abstract. Christian pastors and believers today are still facing exactly the kind of state suppression of worship and speech that provoked God's judgment against Pharaoh in the exodus narrative. They are included here as a corrective to any assumption that the religious liberty I've described is either universal or guaranteed to last. It is neither. And its rarity in the modern world is precisely why the biblical case for protecting and cherishing it carries the weight it does.

ATTACKING THE FAMILY TO CONTROL THE FUTURE

There is a strategic logic buried in Pharaoh's decree that repeats itself across history: a government that wants total control over a population begins by weakening its strongest young men and by leaving young women without husbands, families, or any means of support, thereby making them dependent not on husbands and fathers but on the state itself. Furthermore, by forbidding worship and eradicating churches, there is no prophetic voice standing against the government or available to gather, protect, and care for God's people. However you apply this pattern to any particular

contemporary controversy, the biblical principle stands on its own: God's answer to that strategy, then and always, is to reaffirm the cultural mandate first given in Genesis—be fruitful, multiply, marry, raise children, and exercise dominion—and to identify any government that works against that mandate as a government working directly against God's purposes for human flourishing. Who does that? The Church. When a government positions itself as an obstacle to God's plan for the family, it positions itself for judgment, because it has set itself against the God who is sovereign over every government. The Church must keep standing against the tyranny of the state out of love for God and neighbor; otherwise the nation and the people God loves who live there have no intercessor, mediator, or advocate.

GOD AGAINST THE GODS

The 10 plagues that finally break Pharaoh's resistance are often remembered as a sequence of miraculous disasters, but Scripture frames them as something more specific: a direct confrontation between the Lord and the false gods of Egypt. God tells Moses plainly what is at stake before the final plague falls: "...on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord."^a Read against that statement, each plague takes on a pointed significance.

The Nile, the source of Egypt's agriculture and the object of worship associated with the god Hapi, turns to blood. The sun itself, worshiped in the person of the god Ra, is blotted out by three days of total darkness. Even the death of Egypt's firstborn sons strikes directly at Pharaoh's own claimed divinity, since Pharaoh himself was worshiped as a son of a god and regarded as the guarantor of Egypt's fertility and continuity.

This detail matters for the larger argument of this chapter because it reframes the exodus as something considerably larger than a labor dispute or a political liberation movement. It was a theological and spiritual war, waged by the true God against an entire pantheon of counterfeit gods and the political system built to serve them, with the fate of an enslaved nation hanging in the balance. Pharaoh's magicians could replicate the first two plagues through their own occult arts, but by the third, they are forced to admit defeat: "This is the finger of God."^b Each subsequent plague widens the gap between the counterfeit power available to Egypt's gods and the genuine sovereignty of the God of Israel until Pharaoh's own resistance collapses entirely. God's Kingdom crushes Pharaoh's counterfeit kingdom. Again, the storyline is God and His Kingdom versus government and its gods.

^a Exodus 12:12 ^b Exodus 8:19

This is the deepest reason the exodus functions, throughout the rest of Scripture, as the paradigmatic act of divine deliverance: it was not merely God rescuing an enslaved people from a cruel government, though it was certainly that. It was God demonstrating, plague by plague, exactly who does and does not hold ultimate authority over nations, harvests, life, and death: a demonstration I've already argued applies with equal force to every counterfeit kingdom that has claimed ultimate authority for itself since.

FREED FROM EGYPT, STILL ENSLAVED TO IDOLS

The point about counterfeit worship isn't an abstraction; Scripture illustrates it almost immediately after the exodus itself, in one of the most jarring scenes in the entire Pentateuch. Moses ascends Mount Sinai and is gone for 40 days while he receives the law directly from God. The people below grow restless. They approach Aaron, the very man who had stood beside Moses through every plague and every confrontation with Pharaoh, and they demand, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."^a

Aaron's response is the more disturbing part of the story. Rather than rebuking the request, he collects the people's gold jewelry they plundered from Egypt that was supposed to be used for the Tabernacle and worship of God, melts it down, and fashions it into the shape of a calf or young bull. Baal was considered the most powerful demon-god in the Old Testament, the continual threat to the worship of God alone, and a calf was a young bull. The people declare, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"^b and Aaron builds an altar before it and proclaims a feast to the Lord using the name of the true God to sanctify an idol of his own making. Moses returns from the mountain, carrying the tablets of the law written by God's own hand, to find the people "dancing" around a golden calf they had built with their own hands out of their own jewelry, not even 40 days removed from watching the Red Sea part before them.

This scene is worth sitting with because it is, in miniature, the whole argument of this chapter. A people who had just been rescued from the most literal, brutal form of political bondage imaginable, slavery under a genocidal government, turned almost immediately and manufactured a new demonic master rule over them. Freedom from Pharaoh did not automatically produce freedom of heart; it relocated the same impulse toward idolatry that had always been there, now aimed at an object of their own construction rather than an object imposed on them by a foreign king. This is exactly the

^a Exodus 32:1 ^b Exodus 32:4

principle I've already introduced: if you don't worship God, you'll worship something else, and that something else will enslave you as surely as Pharaoh ever did; the only difference is that this new pharaoh will bear your own fingerprints.

FREEDOM IS NEVER MERELY POLITICAL

The book of Exodus contains one more crucial theological point that keeps this entire discussion from collapsing into mere political theory: liberty, biblically defined, is never only external. The golden calf episode recounted earlier in this chapter makes the point vividly: freedom from an external tyrant didn't, on its own, free the people's hearts from the impulse to worship something other than God, their internal chosen tyrant. This is the deeper pattern underneath every human bondage: if you don't worship God, you'll worship something else like money, pleasure, power, sex, comfort, or fame, and that something else will become its own kind of pharaoh, its own kind of slave master, bringing tyranny instead of liberty.

The only freedom that finally satisfies is freedom in Christ. Sin functions exactly like Pharaoh: it comes to enslave, to delude, disappoint, and destroy the people who choose to dance with it. The gospel's answer is not a political program but a Savior—Jesus, who died for sin and rose again, and who alone can set a person “free indeed.”^a Once set free, the task of life becomes learning to live free: worshipping God alone rather than transferring allegiance from one pharaoh or golden calf to another.

This is why none of this can be reduced to a purely political or nationalistic claim. The nation matters, citizenship matters, and government matters, but none of them can do what only the gospel can do, which is to free a human heart from bondage to sin. External liberty from the state is the first step, and the big step is internal liberty by the Spirit. Political liberty, rightly understood, is meant to create space for that deeper, spiritual liberty to be preached, received, and lived out. That is the whole point of a nation built, however imperfectly, on the conviction that life and liberty come from God.

BOUNDARIES MAKE FREEDOM POSSIBLE

One further dimension of the exodus narrative deserves attention before this chapter turns to America's founding documents: the giving of the law at Sinai, which follows immediately after the exodus from Egypt, is not presented in Scripture as a burden imposed on a newly freed people but

^a Exodus 8:36

as a gift given to protect the very freedom they had just received. A people liberated from tyranny without any structure of law to replace it doesn't remain free for long; it drifts, sooner or later, into either anarchy or tyranny. This explains the history of governments—without law and order, there is anarchy. With godless law and order, there is tyranny. Only with godly law and order can there be liberty. The law given at Sinai—beginning with the 10 Commandments and expanding into detailed instruction covering worship, justice, property, and community life—exists precisely to prevent that drift by establishing clear boundaries within which liberty can actually flourish rather than collapse into disorder. The point of the Law in the Scripture, and the 10 Commandments, which is the heart of the Law, is to prepare former slaves to establish a nation built on reverence to the Law of God to avoid anarchy and tyranny by promoting liberty.

This matters for the argument of this chapter because it clarifies something easily misunderstood about the relationship between law and liberty generally. Liberty, biblically conceived, is never the absence of all restraint. It is the presence of just restraint, rightly ordered—it's the kind that protects individuals and communities from the far greater tyranny of either lawless anarchy or unchecked concentrated power. The framers of the American Constitution, working within a tradition deeply shaped by this same biblical logic, didn't attempt to create a government with no law and no restraint on individual behavior; they attempted to create a government with carefully limited and constitutionally bounded authority, precisely so that liberty could be protected rather than lost to either extreme—anarchy or tyranny. This is the same balance Exodus itself models: a people freed from Pharaoh's tyranny, immediately given God's law, not to re-enslave them but to protect the freedom they had just received.

FROM THE RED SEA TO A REPUBLIC

It's here that the theology of Exodus intersects directly with American history, not by imposing modern politics onto an ancient text, but by observing how self-consciously the American founders drew on this very text.

When the Continental Congress convened in 1776—the same day the Declaration was approved, it appointed a committee of three men—Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams—to propose an official seal for the new nation.¹³ What is striking, and rarely discussed outside of specialist histories, is that two of the three proposals drew directly and explicitly on the book of Exodus.

Franklin's proposal survives in his own handwriting: "Moses standing on the Shore, and extending his Hand over the Sea, thereby causing the

same to overwhelm Pharaoh who is sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his Head and a Sword in his hand. Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Clouds reaching to Moses, to express that he acts by Command of the Deity.” Beneath it he proposed a motto: “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.”¹⁴ Jefferson proposed a different scene from the same book—“the children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a Cloud by day, and a Pillar of Fire by night”—the same imagery of divine guidance recorded in Exodus 13:21-22, applied by Jefferson to a newly forming nation that understood itself, in some sense, to be walking a similar path out of tyranny and into self-governance under God.¹⁵

The committee submitted its report on August 20, 1776. Congress tabled it. Six years and two more committees later, the seal adopted in 1782 retained only one element of their work: the motto *E Pluribus Unum*. The seal that was eventually chosen features the eagle and the pyramid familiar from the back of the one-dollar bill—an image that carries an unintended echo, given that the backdrop of Exodus is God’s people forced by their government to make bricks for Pharaoh’s building projects. But the fact that two of the three most prominent Founding Fathers reached instinctively for the exodus story when asked to symbolize the meaning of the American experiment says a great deal about how deeply that story had shaped their understanding of what they were building.

The Declaration of Independence itself, finalized July 4, 1776, carries the same debt more explicitly still. It’s worth quoting at some length, because the density of its debt to biblical categories only becomes fully clear across several consecutive lines. After identifying the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” as the source of the colonies’ right to a “separate and equal station,” the document continues:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness...And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Six ideas are packed into this single passage, and each one traces

directly back to the theology I've laid out already.

First, human beings are created and therefore equal because they share a common Creator, not because any government declared them so.

Second, God stands over every human government; government is instituted, not self-generating.

Third, rights are endowed by the Creator, meaning no government can legitimately grant or revoke what it didn't itself create.

Fourth, government exists specifically to secure those God-given rights, echoing the pattern of law given after the exodus to protect life and liberty.

Fifth, when government itself becomes the destroyer of those rights rather than their protector—precisely as Pharaoh's government became a destroyer of Hebrew life and liberty—the people have the right, and arguably the responsibility, to alter or abolish it, exactly as the exodus generation left Egypt to found a new nation under new law.

Sixth, and finally, this is a document of sacrifice rather than entitlement: the signers pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their reputations to the cause, a far cry from the language of grievance and demand that so often characterizes political rhetoric today. The heart of Christian statesmanship is servanthood, following the pattern of our King Christ, who came from His throne to serve us.

I'm not claiming that America is beyond criticism or that the Church should defend everything the nation has ever said or done. However, if we are going to critique American history, we have to also evaluate other nations with differing forms of government and be equally critical of any sins in their national history. The constant attack on American history from the godless, progressive, deconstructing Marxists while ignoring the wholesale slaughter of tens of millions of people by Marxist tyrants is a breathtaking example of what Jesus called plank-speck, or pointing out the sawdust in someone else's eye while ignoring the massive beam protruding from your hypocritical head.^a We will explore this later in the book in greater detail.

Also consider the teachings of Islam, which is the world's fastest-growing religion and practiced by a growing number of U.S. politicians. Kafala is the sponsorship framework governing non-citizen labor. Its defining feature is that a migrant worker's legal right to reside in the country is attached not to the state but to a named private sponsor—the *kafeel*—who is ordinarily also the employer. Immigration status and employment are fused. Because the worker cannot lawfully remain without the sponsor, ordinary employment leverage becomes something closer to control over a person's legal existence. Kafala is common today in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, along with Jordan and

^a Matthew 7:3-5

Lebanon. Migrant workers constitute a very large share of the workforce across the region, and in several states, a majority of the total population. Construction and domestic work are the two sectors in which abuse is most consistently documented; domestic workers are the most exposed group, since they are frequently excluded from labor-law coverage altogether and work inside private homes beyond the reach of inspection. What often happens is that people cannot leave the grip of their employer or risk being in country illegally and therefore arrested. The result is a form of slavery in Islamic nations.

Before you hate America, you have to be honest about how it compares to other nations if you hope to operate with any integrity. The Church's role, as I'll argue at length in Chapter 4, is to serve as the moral conscience of the nation, not to endorse it uncritically. This explains why the Church and Christian leaders were the drivers for ending slavery in America—because the exodus story shows God is against it. But it is simply a matter of historical record, not partisan opinion, that the founding documents of the United States were saturated with biblical categories and that the men who wrote them understood themselves to be working, however imperfectly, within a framework inherited from Scripture rather than inventing an entirely secular one from nothing.

This is where the theology traced across this chapter finally lands. The God who creates nations at Babel, who calls Abraham to found one, who places Joseph and Moses as statesmen within and against pagan power, who gives law at Sinai to protect a freedom He has just won—that same God stands behind the founding of the United States, however imperfectly the men who built it up lived up to what they claimed to believe. The story that began in a garden and ran through a burning bush and a parted sea didn't end at Sinai. It kept traveling all the way to a room in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776, where men who knew that story by heart reached for its language when they needed to explain to the world why a new nation had the right to exist at all because it was standing up for liberty against a British Empire they decided was too Egyptian.

But a nation founded on these convictions is not thereby guaranteed to keep them. The next chapter turns to a harder question: what happens when a nation forgets the God whose story shaped its founding? We will study that next after establishing the sevenfold statesmanship example of Moses. Why? God will call you to one or more of these roles as a Christian statesman.

MOSES' SEVENFOLD STATESMANSHIP

1. Christian—Moses' faith was in Christ, and he lived by the principle of the two kingdoms by serving the Kingdom of God in the nation

of Egypt. Hebrews 11:26 says, “[Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”

2. Family Man—Moses was a loving husband and devoted father who humbly spent 40 years in Midian helping his father-in-law tend to the family farm and flocks.
3. Statesman—Moses was a prince of Egypt and then a founding father of Israel. He held political offices by God’s divine calling.
4. Scholar—Moses had one of the finest educations in the world^a and went on, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to pen the first five books of the Old Testament.
5. CEO—Moses led a nation that included the building of the tabernacle for the worship of God, a project that was the equivalent of around \$300 million in today’s dollars, for a 675-square-foot tent.^b
6. Warrior—The ancient historian Josephus (c. 37-100 AD) reports that Pharaoh sent Moses to lead an Egyptian army against the Ethiopians—the kingdom of Cush, in what is now Sudan—and that he defeated a nation that had been a bitter enemy of Egypt. This experience of leading men in wilderness battle also likely helped prepare him to lead the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness.
7. Prophet—As a preacher of repentance, Moses serves as the conscience for the nations of Egypt and Israel, leading God’s people in the repentance of sin.

Which of these roles has God called you to serve in? We see in the example of Moses that all Christians have at least some calling to statesmanship. Perhaps God is calling you to multiple aspects of Christian statesmanship. To do that includes learning to love and serve a wicked nation as Moses did while in Egypt, something we will now learn more about from Daniel.

^a Acts 7:22 ^b Exodus 25-40

CHAPTER 3

LOVING A WICKED NATION

THE HARDER QUESTION

Two questions have been quietly sitting underneath every argument so far in this book. The first: *Should you love your country?* The previous two chapters have answered that question at length: yes, because God created nations, because God determined the nation in which you were born, and because loving your country is one concrete way of loving your God and neighbor. But a second question is harder and unavoidable: *What if your country is not good?* What if, over time, a nation that was once healthy drifts into wickedness? What do you do then?

This chapter answers that question using a principle I introduced earlier: *new days, old demons*. When the same destructive pattern shows up in different eras, different places, and among entirely different peoples, the constant factor may not be political or cultural at all. It may be spiritual. Scripture identifies a specific spiritual force behind this recurring pattern and gives it a name: Babylon.

THE ORIGIN OF BABYLON: NIMROD

Continuing the storyline of the Bible, we return to the book of Genesis, where God judged globalism and created nationalism. Babylon appears in Scripture as both a physical location—a plain called Shinar, modern-day Iraq—and a recurring spiritual force, mentioned more than 300 times across the Bible. Its origin traces back to a single figure introduced in Genesis 10:8–10: “Nimrod...was a mighty hunter before the Lord... The beginning of his kingdom was Babel...in the land of Shinar.” Nimrod was the first man in recorded history to attempt, through sheer force and tyranny, to establish his own kingdom in open defiance of God’s authority: a counterfeit king ruling with counterfeit divine authority. His descendants carried that ambition forward into the next generation, recorded in Genesis 11.

The rest of that story was told in Chapter 1: a united humanity, one

language, gathered on the Plain of Shinar, building a tower to make a name for themselves rather than for God, and being judged and scattered by the Lord Himself. The name itself—“the gateway to demons,” as we saw in Chapter 1—describes with precision what this recurring spirit produces wherever it appears.

SIX CENTURIES LATER: DANIEL IN BABYLON

The spirit of Babylon doesn't stay confined to Genesis. Roughly 800 years after the events of Genesis 11, it resurfaces, literally, in the same location, in the book of Daniel. Daniel 1:1-2 records the moment: “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...And he brought them to the land of Shinar...” The location isn't incidental. It's the same plain, the same spirit, resurfacing in a new era to invade and dismantle a different nation as Babylon, once again, seeks to establish a globalist government by conquering other nations. Nebuchadnezzar carries off the temple vessels, along with the best and brightest of Judah's young people, as captives; among them was a teenager named Daniel.

Daniel's story is worth sitting with because it is the clearest biblical case study of what it looks like to remain faithful to God inside a genuinely wicked nation. Taken captive as a teenager, marched roughly 700 miles from his homeland under armed guard, and stripped of his language, his customs, his freedom, and his worship, Daniel became the legal property of a demonic, tyrannical government. The book bearing his name covers 69 years of his life, showing him serving God faithfully under a succession of wicked kings and nations from his youth into his eighties.

It is worth noting, too, how directly the pattern repeats itself even in modern history: Saddam Hussein, the 20th ruler of the very same territory once called Shinar, styled himself as “the new Nebuchadnezzar” and, like his ancient predecessor, erected a giant statue of himself to be worshiped. *New days, old demons.*

WHAT DANIEL'S STORY ACTUALLY COST HIM

Daniel was a teenager, likely no older than the young people who fill a modern high school, when Jerusalem fell. He had, in all likelihood, never left his own country before, let alone traveled by force under armed guard through roughly 700 miles of open desert to a nation whose language he didn't speak, whose gods he didn't worship, and whose customs he didn't know. He arrived not as an immigrant seeking opportunity but as property:

the legal possession of a foreign king who had just watched that same king's army destroy his home and, quite possibly, kill members of his own family.

Whatever fear, exhaustion, grief, and disorientation you might imagine feeling in that position, Scripture invites you to imagine Daniel feeling it too. That's the same young man, forged in exactly that trauma, who spent the following 69 years, into his eighties, serving God with unshakeable integrity under a succession of pagan, often murderous, kings.

This detail matters for the argument of this chapter because it removes any temptation to treat "faithfulness in a wicked nation" as an abstract theological principle rather than a lived, costly reality. Daniel's faithfulness wasn't achieved from a position of comfort or safety. It was forged in exile, captivity, and repeated threats to his very life, and it remained, across seven decades, remarkably consistent. Whatever a modern believer faces by way of cultural pressure or political disappointment, Daniel's example sets a demanding, and encouraging, benchmark: faithfulness is possible even under circumstances far harsher than most modern readers of this book will ever be asked to endure.

THE SIX-FOLD PATTERN OF THE SPIRIT OF BABYLON

Daniel's account, read alongside the rest of Scripture's treatment of Babylon, yields a recognizable pattern: a kind of playbook this spirit follows whenever and wherever it operates. It is worth laying out plainly, not as a tool for scoring political points, but as a genuine aid to spiritual discernment for believers trying to understand their own moment in history.

First, it crosses borders. The spirit of Babylon doesn't respect the national boundaries God established at Babel. It seeks always to erase distinctions between nations, to disregard borders, and to absorb sovereign peoples into a single, undifferentiated, tyrannical political system. Wherever national borders and boundaries are treated as arbitrary obstacles to be overrun rather than legitimate structures established by God, this spirit is at work.

Second, it silences prophetic voices. Throughout the Babylonian captivity narrative, God's true prophets are opposed, discredited, or killed, while false prophets who tell the government what it wants to hear are elevated. Wherever a culture works systematically to silence those who speak uncomfortable biblical truth, the same pattern is visible.

Third, it corrupts education. The old strategy returned in the atheist Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, which explicitly identified control of the next generation's education as the essential mechanism for transforming a culture by separating children from parents and churches to be raised by the government, "Free education for all children in public schools."¹⁶ Whenever a government works to shape the conscience

of children away from the convictions of their parents and God and toward its own ideology, the spirit of Babylon is at work.

Fourth, it targets young men. 2 Kings 24 records that when Babylon conquered Jerusalem, the strongest warriors—the men most capable of resisting oppression—were the first to be enslaved or killed. Isaiah 39:6-7 prophesies that just before the Babylonian invasion, some of the young men of Judah would be taken captive and made eunuchs. Just like today, the government was castrating young men. A government or culture that works to weaken, demoralize, or physically emasculate its strongest young men is repeating an ancient and recognizable demonic battle plan.

Fifth, it closes the churches. The Babylonian invasion included the deliberate destruction of the temple and the seizure of everything used in the worship of God, cutting His people off from the ability to gather and worship. Any government that treats the Church's freedom to gather and worship as expendable, while treating other institutions as essential, is following the same script. This was on full display in cities across America during the COVID scare when many state governors and attorney generals demanded churches close, but abortion clinics remain open, because murder was essential, but worship was not.

Sixth, it controls believers. The final stage of the pattern is the direct subjugation of God's people: taken captive, enslaved, and compelled to worship other gods or submit their children to the state's formation rather than their own. This is what happened to the nation of Israel in the days of Daniel.

This pattern isn't confined to the ancient world. Scripture traces it forward all the way to the book of Revelation, where "Babylon the Great" appears as the final, climactic form this spirit takes before the return of Christ: a global system that seduces the nations into moral corruption^a, that persecutes and martyrs believers^b, and that is finally and permanently destroyed at Christ's return.^c The persecution of believers happening right now, in places like parts of Africa, Pakistan, and India, is the same ancient pattern still playing out: convert through seduction, or be removed through tyranny. Those, historically, have been the only two options this spirit offers.

DISCERNMENT, NOT PARANOIA

A final caution belongs alongside the six-fold pattern already described, because pattern recognition, handled carelessly, can curdle into something unhealthy: a paranoid habit of seeing demonic conspiracy behind every political disagreement or every policy a believer happens to dislike. That's not

^a Revelation 14:8 ^b Revelation 17:5-6 ^c Revelation 18:21

what I've argued here, and the difference is worth stating plainly.

The pattern Scripture identifies is specific: a recurring, coordinated erosion of national sovereignty, prophetic voice, godly education, masculine strength, corporate worship, and believers' independence from state control, appearing *together* over time as a coherent trajectory rather than as isolated, unrelated events. Not every border dispute reflects the spirit of Babylon; not every curriculum debate is a demonic conspiracy; not every policy a believer dislikes belongs on this list. This is where wild conspiracy theories go too far. Distinguishing an actual instance of this pattern from an ordinary, good-faith policy disagreement requires careful, patient, biblical wisdom, not a reflexive application of ancient categories to every contemporary headline.

Paranoia, by contrast, treats every political opponent as a demon and every disagreement as spiritual warfare. It produces an anxious, bitter, joyless posture, the same posture I'll warn against later in this chapter under the heading of political pessimism. The believer who has genuinely internalized the hope I've described—that Christ has already secured the final outcome, that Babylon falls, and that those who belong to Him share in the victory of our King as eternal citizens of His Kingdom—has no need for paranoia, because paranoia is, at bottom, a symptom of insufficient trust in God's sovereignty and tragically sometimes acting as if Satan were instead sovereign.

Discernment says: *I recognize this pattern, and I will respond to it with clear conviction, sober prayer, and faithful building. Paranoia says: Everything is falling apart, and there is no one to trust so we must burn it all down. That is the spirit of deconstruction, not the Spirit of God.* The difference between the two isn't a matter of degree but of kind: one is rooted in faith, and the other in fear.

That said, the value of naming the pattern clearly is that it equips a believer to recognize the steps to Sodom when they do appear, rather than encountering each individual instance as an isolated surprise with no larger context. A single government restriction on religious gathering might, taken alone, have an innocent explanation. A single curriculum change might in a government school, taken alone, be well-intentioned. But when several of these six markers appear together, sustained over time, reinforcing one another, a believer equipped with this pattern is far better positioned to respond with clear-eyed conviction rather than either naive dismissal or unfounded panic. This is the entire purpose of the "new days, old demons" principle: not to manufacture fear, but to supply the kind of spiritual lenses that believers can wear to see the world through the Word.

THREE MEN WHO WOULD NOT BOW

Daniel's own experience of faithful defiance is well-known, but it wasn't unique among the Hebrew exiles serving in Nebuchadnezzar's court. His three companions (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, given Babylonian names to replace their Hebrew ones as part of the same assimilation program that had renamed Daniel himself) faced their own direct confrontation with the demand for absolute loyalty to the state. Importantly, these godly young men refused to refer to themselves by the names given them by the Babylonian government; their identity remained rooted in their faith no matter what the cost. This is an important lesson: godless governments will call you names and seek to change your identity—and that is an act of spiritual war to be waged by defiantly not letting your enemies define you, but rather your God alone!

Nebuchadnezzar constructs a golden image of himself as a god over the government, 90 feet tall, and commands that at the sound of every instrument in the royal orchestra, all the “peoples, nations, and languages” fall down and worship it; if they don't, they'll be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace.^a This is Babel's ambition recompressed into a single command: one image, one act of worship, from every nation and every language, under threat of death for noncompliance, precisely the counterfeit, coercive unity I've traced back to Genesis 11. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse, and when hauled before the furious king, their answer is respectful, unbending, and rooted in confidence in God rather than in certainty about the outcome.

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.^b

That final clause, “but if not,” deserves particular attention, because it captures something essential to genuine biblical faith under pressure: trust in God's power to deliver, held together with submission to His sovereignty even if deliverance doesn't come. Faith may result in life or death, but never surrender to tyranny. The three men are bound and thrown into a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, hot enough that the soldiers who threw them in are themselves killed by the heat, and Nebuchadnezzar, watching, sees not three men but four walking unbound in the flames, one “like a son of the gods.”^c Jesus Christ Himself came down from His throne

^a Daniel 3:4-6 ^b Daniel 3:17-18 ^c Daniel 3:25

in Heaven to stand with young men facing murder and martyrdom at the hands of a demonic government. The men emerge without so much as the smell of smoke on their clothing, and Nebuchadnezzar, the very king who had commanded their execution, is the one who publicly praises their God as a result. Even a wicked king, confronted with genuine faithfulness under threat of death, becomes an unwitting witness to the God his own empire had tried to suppress. For the believer, the lesson is vital: your test is part of your testimony. If you pass your test, you will be able to testify to the lost people who are watching that your God is alone good and alone Lord.

TWO POSTURES, ONE CHOICE

Given this pattern, it may be easy to reasonably feel dread about the trajectory of your own nation. I'm not trying to pretend otherwise; there's genuine, sober cause for concern about where culture, politics, and morality are trending in the modern West. But Scripture offers something better than false comfort: it offers real hope, grounded not in optimism about human institutions but in the sovereignty of God.

Daniel's own words, spoken from inside the very belly of a wicked empire that took him as a prisoner of war and castrated him, capture this hope precisely: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings..."^a There are, ultimately, only two postures available to a believer watching their culture drift into darkness: anxiety or sovereignty. Anxiety is the fruit of believing that everything depends on human political outcomes. Sovereignty is the fruit of believing that God is still on His throne regardless of who occupies any earthly one. The more fully a believer trusts God's sovereignty, the less room remains for personal anxiety, which is itself a discipline: choosing to look up toward God's plan rather than endlessly scrolling down into every fear-driven headline and algorithm-fed outrage. To worship God, we have to regularly stop looking down at our phones and instead keep looking up to our Lord.

THE KING WHO ATE GRASS

Nebuchadnezzar's own story doesn't end with the furnace. Some years later, at the height of his power, walking on the roof of his royal palace, he surveys the city he has built and declares, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"^b The words are barely out of his arrogant mouth when a voice

^a Daniel 2:20-21 ^b Daniel 4:30

from Heaven pronounces judgment: his kingdom will be taken from him, and he will live like a beast of the field, eating grass like an ox, until he acknowledges “that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”^a The sentence is carried out immediately: Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful ruler in the world, is driven from human society, and his mind is reduced to that of an animal for seven full years. Imagine for a moment the President of the United States out eating grass on the White House lawn for seven years, and you get the sense of how stunning God’s swift crushing of one political tyrant was in that day.

At the end of that period, Scripture records his own testimony, remarkable for what it reveals about the true purpose behind the entire sequence: “At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High...for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation...”^b The king who once erected a golden image demanding universal worship, who once threw faithful men into a furnace for refusing to bow to him, is himself brought low until he bows—not under threat of a furnace, but under the plain, undeniable evidence of his own limitations. A king is just a man. Just because other men worship a king like a god does not change the fact that he’s just a man. It’s hard to imagine a more direct biblical illustration of the claim I keep making throughout this book: every earthly king reigns only by the permission of the true King, and the throne any ruler occupies, however secure it appears, is never ultimately their own.

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

The final humbling of Babylon’s royal line comes later, under Nebuchadnezzar’s successor Belshazzar, in a scene of almost theatrical judgment. Belshazzar throws a great feast for a thousand of his lords and, in a display of contempt for the very God who had humbled his predecessor, calls for the sacred gold and silver vessels looted from the Jerusalem temple to be brought out so that the assembled nobles can drink wine from them while praising “the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.”^c In the middle of the feast, a human hand appears, unattached to any body, and writes four words on the plaster wall of the banquet hall in full view of the king. Belshazzar’s face goes pale. His knees knock together in terror. And none of his wise men can read or interpret what has been written. Once again, we see the storyline of God versus government.

Daniel, by now an old man mostly retired from active court service,

^a Daniel 4:31-32 ^b Daniel 4:34 ^c Daniel 5:2-4

is summoned, and reads the verdict plainly: “God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end...you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting...your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”^a That very night, Scripture records, Belshazzar is killed and his kingdom falls. The scene functions as a kind of final exclamation point to the entire Babylonian storyline traced from Nimrod onward: the empire that began by defying God at the Tower of Babel ends, centuries later, with a king who mocked God directly, judged by God in the same hour the judgment was pronounced by a godly statesman and prophet named Daniel. Between Nebuchadnezzar’s seven years as a beast of the field and Belshazzar’s single terrifying night, Scripture leaves little room to doubt its own verdict about what ultimately happens to power that sets itself against the God who grants it. Jesus keeps revealing Himself as the King over all Kings and the Lord over all Lords whose Kingdom rules over all kingdoms.

FAITHFULNESS UNDER A TRAP SET BY LAW

Decades later, an aging Daniel faces a strikingly similar test, though under a different empire and a subtler mechanism. By this point, the Babylonian empire had fallen to the Medes and Persians as God’s judgment. Daniel, now well into his career as a trusted administrator, has risen to such prominence that jealous officials conspire to remove him—not through direct accusation, since his integrity leaves them nothing to accuse him of, but by exploiting his faithfulness itself. They persuade King Darius to sign an irrevocable decree that for 30 days, anyone who prays to any god or man other than the king will be thrown into a den of lions.^b

Daniel’s response is neither defiance for its own sake nor quiet compliance to avoid trouble: “He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.”^c The operative phrase here is “as he had done previously.” Daniel doesn’t change his practice of prayer to accommodate the new law; he continues exactly as he always had, in full view of windows facing home in Jerusalem where Jesus would one day arrive, making no attempt to hide his devotion but making no political spectacle of it either. He is caught, as his accusers intended, and Darius, who valued Daniel and had been manipulated into signing the decree, is forced by his own law to have Daniel thrown into the den of lions, though Scripture notes the king “was much distressed” and spent the night fasting, unable to sleep.^d

At dawn, Darius rushes to the den and calls out, and Daniel answers: “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not

^a Daniel 5:26-28 ^b Daniel 6:7-9 ^c Daniel 6:10 ^d Daniel 6:14-18

harmed me...”^a Daniel is lifted out unharmed, and the officials who conspired against him are thrown into the den in his place. This little picture is a foreshadowing of the justice and wrath awaiting political tyrants who persecute God’s people when King Jesus returns.

Both stories—the furnace and the den—describe the same underlying truths: a government demanding an act of ultimate loyalty that belongs only to God, believers who refuse without seeking out the confrontation, and a God who is fully capable of delivering His people even from a government’s most severe instruments of coercion and destruction. Scripture, however, is equally honest, in the case of many other faithful believers across history, that deliverance does not always come in this life. Hebrews makes this explicit. In one breath the writer praises those who “stopped the mouths of lions”—Daniel among them—and in the next: “Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.”^b Same faith. Same God. Different outcome. What both stories model, regardless of outcome, is the posture Daniel himself articulated earlier in this chapter: seeing the earthly king clearly, while trusting the greater King who reigns above him. Our goal as believers is not to win but to worship.

WHEN YOU CANNOT LEAVE

If a believer finds themselves living under a genuinely bad government and is able to leave, Scripture doesn’t romanticize staying; the entire book of Exodus is, in one sense, the story of God’s people leaving an oppressive government behind. If you are in a bad state in America, for example, move like my family did from Seattle to Scottsdale. If you are in a bad country, legally immigrate to a better nation, as my Irish ancestors did. But what does Scripture say to those who can’t leave, those who are, for whatever reason, stuck?

The prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Daniel, answers this question directly in a letter sent to the Israelites living in exile in Babylon. Jeremiah 29:4-7 records God’s instructions to His captive people, and they amount to seven concrete commands for how to live faithfully inside a wicked nation you can’t escape:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in

^a Daniel 6:22 ^b Hebrews 11:33, 36-37

marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Notice what God doesn't say. He doesn't promise a quick rescue. He doesn't tell them to organize a resistance or to withdraw into a holy huddle and wait it out. He tells them to live—ordinary, rooted, generational living—in the city that conquered them. He gives seven commands, and not one of them is political.

1. *Build houses and live in them.* Put down roots. Buy a home, however modest, rather than waiting for permission from a hostile culture before beginning to build a life and a future. Don't move into government housing, get some land, and have your own little dominion over it.
2. *Plant gardens and eat their produce.* Pursue self-sufficiency rather than dependency. Stay out of unnecessary debt, provide for your own household, and avoid becoming so reliant on a hostile government that you have no ability to live, worship, or provide apart from its permission.
3. *Take wives, and give your sons and daughters in marriage.* Marriage remains central to faithful living even, especially, inside a culture that has abandoned biblical convictions about marriage and family. God's design for marriage doesn't change because the surrounding culture has changed its mind. If the future is filled with godless people, God's people need to send their children and grandchildren into that future as missionaries to reach those lost souls.
4. *Multiply: have sons and daughters, and do not decrease.* Even in a culture that seems dark, children remain a blessing and a strategic act of faith and hope. A generation raised to know and love God, sent into a dark world as light, is precisely what changes a culture's trajectory over time—not despair, but faithful reproduction of godly households, generation after generation. This isn't a theoretical claim. Believers who have raised children in genuinely difficult urban environments—in neighborhoods marked by open drug use, homelessness, and civic disorder rather than in comfortable suburban isolation from those realities—often report that their children's faith grew stronger, not weaker, for having seen firsthand the alternative up close. Watching a culture without Christ collapse in real time, at close range, tends to make the case for the gospel more vividly than any sermon could; children who grow up seeing

exactly what the absence of God produces are frequently the ones least tempted to romanticize it. This is our story. Our five kids hate socialism and atheism because they saw those twin forces of destruction repeatedly wreck the urban city they grew up in. The light always shines brightest in the darkness.

5. *Seek the welfare of the city.* Rather than merely complaining about a nation's condition, believers are called to actively contribute to its good: to make their city, their neighborhood, their sphere of influence better than they found it, understanding that the community's welfare and their own welfare are bound together. This is part of the cultural mandate we studied to exercise dominion: do your best to bring as much God and as much good to wherever you have influence.
6. *Pray for it.* Believers are called to pray for their nation and its leaders more than they complain about them—to hold, as Jesus did looking at Jerusalem, a heart that breaks with grief over a nation's condition rather than a heart hardened into bitterness. Listen to how He said it: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”^a That is grief, not contempt—and it was aimed at a city that would kill Him within the week. There are two ways to look at the failures of a wicked nation: with anger and contempt, or with the kind of grief that says, *These are people made in the image of God, deceived by a spirit they don't understand, and they deserve better than this.* Jesus began His ministry declaring He had come to set captives free.^b This means that Satan, demons, and the wicked world system that they use to create governments that oppress people are our enemy, but lost people are not our enemy; they are captives in war who need to be set free by King Jesus, and we are sent to be part of His rescue mission.
7. *Be a builder.* The final exhortation is to build: a family, a business, a ministry, a church, and a legacy. Faithful presence, expressed through building rather than merely critiquing, is what it looks like to trust God's sovereignty while living inside a nation that hasn't yet turned back to Him. Today, it is faddish to tear everything down rather than build something up. It's easy to critique what other people are doing and much harder to go do something. This is the Christian call: don't whine or break things; worship and build things.

^a Matthew 23:37 ^b Luke 4:18

This includes families, churches, and businesses to glorify God and bring good to others.

BUILD LIKE YOU'RE STAYING

Jeremiah's seven-point letter to the exiles would have sounded surprising to its original recipients, because the surprise is part of what makes it useful for believers navigating a difficult culture today. The exiles in Babylon were, understandably, hoping for one of two things: either rapid deliverance or, failing that, permission to disengage entirely from a nation they had every reason to resent. To be honest, if, for example, Mexico invaded Arizona, where I live, took me as a slave, made me learn Spanish, and castrated me, I would be hard-pressed to seek the well-being of Mexico and Mexicans.

Jeremiah doesn't promise a swift rescue; elsewhere in the same letter, he specifies that the exile will last 70 years—long enough that most of the adults receiving the letter would live out the rest of their lives in Babylon and never see their homeland again. Nor does he counsel resentful disengagement—“tune out,” as the hippies used to say. Instead, he instructs them to build permanent homes, plant long-term gardens, marry, have children, and, most strikingly, actively seek the good of the very city that had conquered them and to pray for it. Having a multi-generational vision is the Christian way to thrive in Babylon. And, make no mistake, we are living in Babylon.

This is a strategy built neither on optimism about Babylon's government nor on despair about God's people ever flourishing again. It is built on a settled confidence that God remains sovereign regardless of who currently holds political power and that faithful, patient, generational building is itself a form of hope, arguably a more durable form than any political victory could provide. A political victory can be reversed in a single election cycle. A household raised across decades to know, love, and serve God, and a business or ministry built with integrity across a lifetime, leave a mark that outlasts almost any single political outcome. This is the deeper logic behind Jeremiah's instructions, and it is precisely the logic already commended in Chapters 1 and 2's treatment of marriage, family, and the cultural mandate: build for the long term, trust God's sovereignty over the short term, and let faithfulness, not anxiety, define the shape of your life. Joy should be in us, even when Babylon is rising around us.

NOT THE FIRST EXILE, NOT THE LAST

It is worth situating Daniel and Jeremiah's exile within the larger sweep of Israel's history, because doing so reveals a pattern that repeats far

beyond this single episode and offers a further layer of hope to the argument I've been building. The Babylonian exile was neither the first nor the last time God's people found themselves living as a minority, or even a captive population, inside a hostile or indifferent culture. Joseph lived as a foreigner and eventually a prisoner in Egypt centuries earlier. The entire nation lived as slaves in Egypt for 400 years before the exodus. Centuries after Daniel and Jeremiah, the early Church found itself a persecuted minority scattered across the Roman Empire, meeting in homes and catacombs, regularly subject to arrest, confiscation of property, and execution for the crime of confessing that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord.

In every one of these episodes, the biblical pattern is remarkably consistent: God's people are called to faithful endurance, marked by exactly the qualities Jeremiah's letter to the exiles commends: building, planting, marrying, multiplying, seeking the welfare of wherever they found themselves, and trusting God's sovereign timeline rather than their own. And in every one of these episodes, without exception, the exile or persecution eventually ended, because God, in His own timing, brought it to an end; the exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah, and the Roman Empire itself, centuries after crucifying Christ and persecuting His Church, was eventually transformed by the very faith it had once tried to eradicate.

This pattern doesn't guarantee any particular outcome for any particular nation in any particular generation; Scripture nowhere promises that every hostile culture will eventually convert or that every season of difficulty will resolve as neatly as the return from Babylonian exile did. Jesus told His disciples the opposite: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."^a The promise isn't an easy road; it's a settled outcome. The Bible does establish a track record substantial enough to ground genuine hope rather than mere wishful thinking: God's people, across 4,000 years of recorded history, have weathered captivity, persecution, and cultural hostility repeatedly, and in every case, the faithfulness commended by Jeremiah's letter—building rather than despairing, multiplying rather than retreating—proved to be exactly the right posture for whatever came next.

GRIEF, NOT BITTERNESS

Jesus wept over Jerusalem rather than merely condemning it, and that observation deserves one final elaboration before this chapter closes, because it shapes the emotional posture I've been commending throughout this

^a John 16:33

book. There's a real difference between a heart that has grown bitter toward a wicked culture and a heart that has grown grieved by it, and the difference isn't merely one of tone. It produces entirely different behavior over time. Bitterness curdles into contempt, and contempt eventually stops trying to reach the people it has come to despise; it settles instead into a kind of comfortable, self-righteous distance, more interested in being proven right about the culture's decline than in seeing anyone within it actually reached and restored. Grief, by contrast, keeps a believer engaged, because grief flows from love and from the conviction that the people caught up in a wicked culture's patterns aren't primarily enemies to be defeated but image-bearers of God who have been deceived and who God alone can give true eternal life and liberty.

This distinction matters practically for whether the six-fold pattern named earlier in this chapter and the sober warnings issued throughout this book harden into contempt or stay rooted in grief. I'm not offering any of it as ammunition for contempt toward those who disagree, vote differently, or hold to the very ideologies I've critiqued here. It's offered as a call to the same grief-fueled engagement Jesus modeled looking over a city that would, within days, call for His crucifixion: a love that tells the truth plainly, that doesn't flinch from naming what is wrong, and that never stops hoping and working for the day when that same city might yet turn and be saved.

POLITICAL PESSIMISM VS. MISSIONARY MINDSET

There is a temptation, when a culture appears to be drifting badly, to collapse into what might be called political pessimism: a posture that sees only the problems, concludes there is no hope, and settles for cynicism, bitterness, or withdrawal. That posture isn't available to a Christian who believes what Scripture teaches about the sovereignty of God and the power of the gospel. The alternative is a missionary mindset: recognizing that the darkness visible in a culture is simply what happens when people don't yet know Jesus Christ, and responding not with despair but with renewed urgency to proclaim the gospel that alone changes people from the inside, generation after generation, city after city, nation after nation.

The hope of any nation was never fundamentally political to begin with. It's spiritual. The Church, faithfully preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and making disciples by teaching the whole counsel of God's Word, is the true engine of lasting cultural change, not because Christians should retreat from civic life, but because the deepest problems any nation faces are problems only the gospel can actually solve. Scripture's own ending isn't ambiguous about how this story concludes: Christ returns, the spirit of Babylon is finally and permanently judged, and those who belong to Him

share in that victory. Warrior King Jesus is how Revelation 19:11-17 says we will see Jesus' return:

...I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

One King conquering all nations is how the story ends. Until that day, the calling is not anxiety, and it is not withdrawal. It's to build, to pray, to seek the welfare of the place God has sent you, and to trust the King who reigns even over the kings of Babylon.

THE END OF BABYLON

Babylon's story runs all the way to Scripture's final book, because the same spirit introduced at the Tower of Babel and embodied in Nebuchadnezzar's empire is shown to reach its climax—and its final judgment—in the last days. The demonic spirit of Babylon that rises in Genesis falls in Revelation. Revelation 14:8 announces its fall in advance: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." One of the defining marks of this spirit, across every era in which it has appeared, is its ability to unite otherwise fractious nations and peoples around little else besides shared moral corruption, an observation as true of the ancient world as it is of the modern one. Perversion is a great unifying force for evil.

Revelation 16:19 describes God's judgment on the spirit of Babylon directly: "The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath." Notice here that the demonic spirit of Babylon will rise up to rule the "nations" until King Jesus returns. Revelation 17:5-6 names the spirit of Babylon with unusual specificity: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations... drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," a description that lines up disturbingly well with the modern reality of

Christian persecution and martyrdom in parts of the world today, which by many measures is at the highest level it has ever been in recorded history. Revelation 18:2 pronounces the final verdict: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit,” and Revelation 18:21 depicts the completeness of that judgment through the image of a great millstone hurled into the sea: “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more...”

The demonic spirit of Babylon is devoted to exercising demonic dominion in every generation. If Christians exit the public square, then they are surrendering just like Adam did in the garden. Believers must stand—a common theme throughout the Scriptures. In John 17:14-18, Jesus prayed that we would not leave the world, or leave Him, but stand for Him in the world until He returns:

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Jesus Himself, in Matthew 13:41-43, describes what will finally happen to the spirit of Babylon and everything built upon it, echoing the same furnace imagery used against Daniel’s three friends centuries earlier in Babylon: “The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace...Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” The government of Babylon once tried to throw God’s faithful people into a furnace and failed; Christ promises that when He returns, the tables will finally and permanently turn.

This matters because it changes how a believer is meant to experience the anxiety of watching current events unfold. Prophecy exists, in part, precisely so that believers can know how the story ends and therefore watch its unfolding chapters without the same panic that grips those who don’t know the ending. There is a difference between watching a live sporting event with no idea how it will conclude and watching a rebroadcast classic of a game whose outcome you already know. For the believer who trusts what Scripture reveals about the ultimate fate of every Babylon that has ever risen, current events can be watched with sober concern rather than despair, because in the end, God’s people are on the winning side, however dark a given chapter may currently appear.

NEITHER DENIAL NOR DESPAIR

None of this removes the weight of the present moment; it reframes it. A believer watching current trends in politics, economics, morality, and culture isn't wrong to feel real concern. I've already acknowledged that the trajectory of much of Western culture gives genuine cause for sober assessment, not naive optimism. But that concern is meant to exist within a larger frame of trust, not in place of it.

Daniel could see Nebuchadnezzar; he could also see, by faith, that Nebuchadnezzar's authority itself rested under the still-greater King Jesus. That double vision, genuine engagement with present reality, held together with genuine confidence in God's ultimate sovereignty, is what keeps a believer from collapsing into either naive denial on one side or corrosive despair on the other. It's possible, and it is in fact the calling of every believer living through a difficult era to hold both realities honestly at once: the world isn't yet as it should be, and the God who governs it has already secured how it will finally end.

This is the whole shape of what this chapter has traced: from Nimrod's first defiant kingdom to the scattering at Babel to Nebuchadnezzar's furnace and his madness to Belshazzar's wall and Daniel's lions to Jeremiah's letter instructing exiles to build houses and plant gardens in the very city that had conquered them. The spirit of Babylon is old, and it is patient, and it has worn many names across many centuries. But so is the answer Scripture gives to it: a Spirit-filled, joyful people who build, marry, multiply, pray, evangelize, and seek the welfare of wherever God has placed them, trusting, as Daniel did, that the King above every king has already numbered Babylon's days, in every generation it appears. A nation, even a wicked one, is still owed something from the Church that lives inside it, which raises the next question this book has yet to answer: *What, exactly, does a Christian owe the government God has placed over them?*

CHAPTER 4

TWO KINGDOMS, ONE LORD

A QUESTION EVERY CHRISTIAN EVENTUALLY HAS TO ANSWER

What is the relationship between the Church and the state? The question sounds simple, but it's actually complex. Should the government have any say in how a church worships, who leads it, or what its pastors preach? Almost every Christian would instinctively answer no. But the reverse question is just as important and far less frequently asked with the same clarity: does the Church have any legitimate voice in the affairs of the state, and if so, how much, and under what conditions?

Before answering that question, it's worth pausing on a smaller, more personal one first. Are you a conservative who happens to be a Christian, or a Christian who happens to be conservative? The distinction matters enormously. If you're a conservative first, Christianity becomes a tool for justifying whatever conservatives already believe. If you're a Christian first, your highest allegiance belongs to Jesus Christ alone, which means that on some issues you may find yourself more conservative than most conservatives, and on others you may find yourself willing to say, even to people who share your politics, "The Bible disagrees with you here; repent." Being a Christian has to matter more than any other loyalty, including being a good patriot. That ordering of loyalties is the subject of this chapter.

TAXES TO ROME, ALLEGIANCE TO GOD

Scripture and church history alike converge on a governing principle here, often called the *two kingdoms* doctrine. Jesus Himself articulates it in John 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world." Standing before Pilate, under the authority of the Roman Empire, Jesus acknowledges the existence of an earthly kingdom while simultaneously identifying Himself as King of an entirely different one. He makes the same distinction concretely in Matthew 22:19-21, when asked about paying taxes to Caesar: "...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus paid His taxes to Rome and gave His ultimate allegiance to God,

simultaneously, without contradiction. There are two kingdoms, and a faithful Christian lives within both, while never confusing which one holds final authority. This is why we tithe to God and pay taxes to the government.

This has an immediate implication: a Christian's primary allegiance isn't to their nation but to the Kingdom of God. This doesn't diminish love of country; Chapters 1 and 2 of this book have already established at length why Christians should love the nation in which God has sovereignly placed them.^a But it does mean that love of country is always subordinate to love of God, never a substitute for it, or equal alongside of it.

Christians don't worship the state, the government, or any human ruler, a temptation as old as Pharaoh in Exodus and as enduring as the Roman insistence that "Caesar is Lord." The Church's answer, then and now, has always been the same: Caesar is not Lord. Jesus is Lord. And because there are two kingdoms, the state has no right to dictate how the Church worships. Each kingdom has its own lane.

ALL AUTHORITY IS BORROWED

The New Testament's fullest treatment of how these two kingdoms relate comes in Romans 13, written by Paul to Christians living under a genuinely oppressive Roman government, the same government that had crucified Jesus. Working through this chapter carefully answers several practical questions.

Do God's people have to obey the government? Romans 13:1 answers plainly: "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." Several principles follow from this.

First, God is the ultimate source of all authority, and every human authority (parental, civil, and ecclesial) is a derivative, delegated share of His divine authority. Second, God's authority operates both externally (through parents, teachers, employers, and governments) and internally (through the Holy Spirit, in those who belong to Christ). This is why a truly Spirit-filled people need less external coercion; internal self-control replaces the need for external institutional control. Third, this authority structure moves through recognizable stages across a life: parental authority in childhood, educational authority in school, and civil authority in adulthood.

The state, in this framework, is described as "God's servant,"^b meaning government exists under God's authority and is accountable to Him, not superior or equal to Him. Scripture is realistic about what happens when a government forgets this: when a government stops acknowledging

^a Genesis 11; Acts 17:26 ^b Romans 13:4

God, it tends to start acting as though it were God, claiming the kind of comprehensive knowledge and control that belong to Him alone as omniscient and sovereign. Part of the Church's ongoing role is to remind the government of what it is and isn't: an instituted authority under God, just a government and not God.

Can the government take innocent human life? Romans 13:2-4 clarifies the purpose of governmental authority: "...rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad...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." The image of the sword indicates that government has genuine authority to punish wrongdoing, even with lethal force where justice requires it, but this authority exists specifically to restrain evil, not to perpetrate it. As a tangent, the 10 Commandments forbid murder, which is the taking of innocent life, not all killing, because that can include stopping evil before it kills innocent people by killing the evildoer. Rightful killing is how the state ends wrongful murder.

SELF-CONTROL BEATS STATE CONTROL

Romans 13 also clarifies why government is necessary at all: remove all civil authority entirely, and the result isn't freedom but anarchy, a condition in which the strongest and most ruthless dominate everyone weaker than themselves, since nothing restrains them. Anarchy isn't a neutral absence of government; it's a vacuum that the most violent members of any society will inevitably fill. The cartels ruling Mexico and gangs terrorizing Haiti are present examples of anarchy ruling. Judges describes the first condition in a single line: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."^a

The opposite extreme is tyranny: a single person or small group holding all the weapons and all the power, exactly as Pharaoh did in Exodus, or as various 20th-century dictatorships have done since. Neither anarchy nor tyranny is compatible with human flourishing. What Scripture calls for, and what a healthy society requires, is government substantial enough to restrain evil and maintain order, while remaining accountable enough that it doesn't itself become the very tyranny it was instituted to prevent. Anarchy and tyranny lead to misery and never liberty.

The internal authority described earlier matters here too. A people genuinely filled with the Spirit require dramatically less external coercion, because they're governing themselves from within through conscience and self-control rather than merely complying with the threat of punishment.

^a Judges 21:25

We'd need far fewer police, courts, and jails if more people were led by the Spirit of God. This is part of why the Church's evangelistic and discipling work isn't a distraction from civic life but a direct contribution to it: every person genuinely transformed by the gospel is, in a very practical sense, one less person a police force needs to restrain.

TAXES, TITHES, AND TWO DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

Romans 13:7 gives a brief but pointed instruction on a subject every citizen of every nation eventually has to reckon with: "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." Jesus modeled this Himself; even though He was God incarnate, He paid the taxes levied on Him by the very empire that would later crucify Him, and He instructed His followers to do the same. Paying one's taxes, however imperfect the government that collects them, is a matter of simple biblical obedience.

It's worth noticing, though, how differently Scripture's own model of giving is structured compared to most modern tax systems. The tithe described throughout the Old Testament calls for a flat proportion, 10 percent of firstfruits or gross, given by everyone regardless of income level, rather than a system in which the rate itself escalates depending on how much a person earns. Here the "two kingdoms" comparison runs in an unexpected direction: the Church's own giving structure, rooted in Scripture, operates on a simpler and arguably more consistent principle of proportional generosity than many modern civil tax codes achieve.

None of this excuses believers from paying what is lawfully required of them; Jesus paid taxes, and so should every Christian. But it also doesn't prevent believers from working, as citizens, to advocate for policies and leaders who will be better stewards of what is collected and lower taxes. Voting for candidates who will use public funds wisely is itself a legitimate expression of loving God and your neighbor, since poor stewardship of public money is not a victimless matter. It's a burden ultimately carried by real people, including generations not yet born who will inherit whatever incomprehensible debt the present generation leaves behind.

THE LINE NO GOVERNMENT SHOULD CROSS

Scripture doesn't treat all governments as morally equivalent. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan," and Proverbs 14:34 adds, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." No government will

ever be perfect, because every government is administered by sinners. Even a perfect system of government would be imperfect because imperfect sinners were governing. Scripture, however, clearly distinguishes governments that are relatively just from those that have become unjust, even tyrannical.

Matthew's Gospel offers a vivid case study. When Herod, the political ruler of Judea, determined to kill the infant Jesus, "an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt...'"^a This was, quite simply, an unjust government issuing an unjust decree: the same pattern that appears when Pharaoh orders the death of Hebrew infants in Exodus. As an aside, the progressive left's claim that Jesus was an illegal alien is, in fact, untrue. That is a weaponizing of the Scriptures in an effort to eradicate the national borders God created, as we studied in Genesis, and remove border patrol agents so that the spirit of Babylon meets no resistance. Egypt, where Jesus fled, was a Roman province in that day—a bit like Puerto Rico today, a US territory where travel from the mainland requires no passport and isn't technically leaving the country. Jesus' family legally moved from one part of the Roman Empire, where their son would be murdered by the government, to another part of that same nation, where His life would be spared. Today, the equivalent would be parents moving their family from one state that wanted to seize custody of a child with gender confusion caused by trauma from their parents to a more conservative state where they could raise their child according to their Christian convictions without the state seizing custody of their child.

The story of Moses in Egypt and Jesus in Rome is this: wherever government overreach takes the lives of the innocent, especially the youngest and most defenseless, it has crossed a clear biblical line into injustice. The Church has both the standing and the responsibility to name that plainly, not as a partisan political statement but as a prophetic one, because the Church's calling is to be the conscience of the state, especially when the state has no conscience.

WHEN OBEDIENCE REACHES ITS LIMIT

Romans 13 commands obedience to government, but it isn't the only word Scripture has on the subject, and it was never intended to function as an unconditional command with no exceptions. Two further texts round out the picture.

The apostle Peter writes, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution...Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."^b And yet this is the same Peter who, in Acts 5, was commanded by

^a Matthew 2:13 ^b 1 Peter 2:13-17

the governing authorities to stop preaching the gospel and refused, declaring instead, “We must obey God rather than men.”^a

The apostle Paul writes similarly submissive instructions in Titus 3:1-2: “...be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.” And yet this is the same Paul who spent roughly five and a half years of his ministry in custody or in prison for defying government authorities when their demands conflicted with obedience to God. He wrote several of his epistles—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, known as the “prison epistles”—from behind bars.

The pattern that emerges is coherent: Christians aren’t anarchists. Scripture consistently calls believers to honor authority, to avoid a posture of reflexive rebellion, and to remember that rebellion against legitimate authority has its origin in Satan’s own original revolt against God. Isaiah records Satan’s anarchist, rebellious words: “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high...”^b Every rebellion since has been a variation on that sentence. Submission to authority is the default posture of godliness, and it should remain the default posture until authority commands something so ungodly that submission itself would require sin.

Civil disobedience, biblically understood, is a last resort. Not a first response, and not a lifestyle of habitual defiance, but a narrow and serious exception exercised only in two situations. The first is when a government commands what God forbids (like when Herod ordered the killing of infants), and the second is when a government forbids what God commands (like when believers today, in various parts of the world, are imprisoned simply for gathering to worship).

NO RIOT, NO REBELLION, ONE REFUSAL

The principle “we must obey God rather than men,” already cited above from Acts 5, is worth setting in its fuller narrative context, because the scene surrounding it is a remarkably concrete illustration of the proper posture toward unjust authority. Peter and John, shortly after Pentecost, heal a lame beggar at the temple gate and use the resulting crowd that gathers as an occasion to preach Christ. The temple authorities, alarmed at the growing influence of these preachers, arrest them and haul them before the Sanhedrin, the very council that had orchestrated Jesus’ own crucifixion only weeks earlier.

The council’s demand is narrow and, on its face, almost unreasonable by the standards of any government managing public order: stop speaking about this Jesus, and stop teaching in his name because it creates crowds and

^a Acts 5:29 ^b Isaiah 14:13

controversies. Peter and John's reply draws the precise line at issue: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."^a The council, unable to punish them without risking a riot given the popularity of the healing, releases them with threats.

It doesn't last. Acts 5 records the apostles arrested again, this time by an entire posse of the temple guard, imprisoned overnight, only to be freed by an angel and found preaching again in the temple courts the very next morning, prompting the exasperated high priest's complaint: "...you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching..."^b Brought before the council a second time, facing men with the demonstrated power to have them killed, Peter delivers that same line: "We must obey God rather than men."^c

What makes this scene instructive isn't merely the apostles' courage but the specific shape of their defiance. They don't organize a rebellion against the Sanhedrin's broader authority. They don't incite the crowd to violence. They don't deny the council's legitimate jurisdiction over most matters. They simply refuse the one specific command that would require disobeying God, accept the legal consequences that follow, and continue their ministry the moment they are released. This is civil disobedience in its purest biblical form: narrow, respectful of the authority being disobeyed even in the act of disobedience, and utterly unwilling to trade away obedience to God for safety from human punishment. The story ends with persecution and praise in Acts 5:40–42:

...when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

NOT BECAUSE THEY DESERVED IT

Romans 13's instruction to honor governing authorities is remarkable, given who occupied Rome's throne at the time Paul wrote it. Most historians date Romans to around A.D. 57, during the early reign of the emperor Nero, a ruler who would, within a few years of receiving Paul's letter, blame the great fire of Rome on Christians and respond with a wave of persecution so severe that Paul himself is traditionally believed to have been executed under it, along with the apostle Peter.

^a Acts 4:19-20 ^b Acts 5:28 ^c Acts 5:29

This isn't a minor detail. Paul wasn't writing his instruction to "be subject to the governing authorities" from a place of political comfort, under a benevolent government that had earned his cooperation. He was writing it about, and to believers living under, one of the most brutal and cruel regimes in the ancient world: a regime that would soon use Christians as human torches to light its garden parties at night.

Christians are called to honor God by honoring the civil authority in government. Christians are welcome to move when they don't like their national government, just as they did in Exodus. Christians are welcome to move from one part of their nation to another part if they believe the government there is more just, just as Jesus' parents did. Christians are welcome to practice civil disobedience when absolutely necessary to remain faithful to God. And Christians should expect to suffer in some form or fashion by governments because all are flawed, and some are entirely evil.

PREACH AS THOUGH IT'S YOUR LAST

The principle of civil disobedience isn't merely theoretical; it plays out in the real lives of real pastors, often in ways far less dramatic than imprisonment but no less costly. I know a pastor who lives in a large rural county in Washington state. The government decided they needed a new fire department, and rather than choosing from the open acres of pasture and farmland, they decided to invoke eminent domain and tear down one of the largest churches in the county. The pastor had to fight back legally, disobeying the order of the government to shut down his church.

Years ago, on a Saturday night as I was getting ready to preach the next morning, I got a call from a pastor in another state, a man I'd never met or spoken to. "Is this Pastor Mark?" he asked. I said it was. "I'm sorry to call you so late," he said. "I need your help. I'm a pastor, and I'm in trouble, and I've heard you've been in a lot of trouble too, so I'm calling." I told him he'd come to the right place; I had, by that point, something close to a master's degree in trouble. I asked if I could put my wife on speakerphone, since she was there with me, and he agreed.

He told me he'd pastored his church for decades, watching it grow from a small gathering into a large congregation. Every year, on Pro-Life Sunday, he preached a sermon affirming the sanctity of unborn life. This particular year, a small group of agitators had gained seats on the church's governing board, and they'd made it clear: if he preached that sermon again, they had the votes to remove him as pastor. "I don't know what to do," he told me. "If I preach the sermon I've always preached, I'll be fired, and my people will lose their pastor. If I don't, I'll be violating my conscience and my calling before God."

This was a smaller-scale version of exactly the pattern already traced through Peter and Paul above—not civil government this time, but church government, demanding silence about something God had clearly spoken.

My advice to him was direct: preach it. If it's going to be your last sermon, go out swinging. Give your congregation everything you have rather than changing the message to keep your position. If they're going to fire you over it, make the last one the best sermon you've ever preached, because you answer to God before you answer to a governing board. Disobey, preach life, get fired, and, one day, stand before Jesus to get your performance review.

A LETTER FROM A JAIL CELL

Among the most famous American applications of the civil disobedience principle traced through Peter, Paul, and the Sanhedrin scene above came not from a legal brief but from a jail cell. In April 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama, for leading a nonviolent march without a permit, and while in custody, he wrote a lengthy open letter responding to a group of white clergymen who had publicly urged him to slow down and pursue change only through the courts rather than through direct, public demonstration. King was not a godly man in belief or behavior, but, in this instance, he did something good.

King's answer draws on exactly the theological categories laid out above. He distinguishes between just and unjust laws in terms remarkably close to the Romans 13 framework already discussed: a just law, he argues, is one that squares with the moral law of God, while an unjust law is one that degrades human personality, and "one has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws" while having "a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." He points explicitly to the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's refusal to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's image and to the early Christians' willingness to face lions rather than renounce Christ as precedents for exactly the kind of principled, law-breaking-while-consequence-accepting resistance traced from Acts 5 forward.

Critically, King insisted that this disobedience be conducted "openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty," the same posture modeled by Peter and John after their arrest and by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before the furnace: refuse the specific unjust command, submit to the legitimate consequences that follow, and never resort to violence or contempt toward the authorities being disobeyed.

King's letter is instructive in two directions at once. It demonstrates that the biblical framework this chapter has laid out isn't a partisan invention serving one side of contemporary political debate. It's a framework substantial enough to have grounded one of the most significant nonviolent

civil rights movements in American history, led by a Christian minister who, despite being a deeply flawed man, cited Scripture directly. Without endorsing the person's beliefs and behaviors, there is a lot to be learned from the principles that guided much of the Civil Rights movement, which was driven, in large part, by Christians. And it demonstrates, in its author's own insistence on lawful consequence and nonviolent method, exactly the disciplined restraint this chapter has argued belongs alongside any act of Christian civil disobedience: resistance aimed narrowly at a specific unjust law, conducted without contempt for legitimate authority as such, and willing to bear whatever cost that resistance brings.

FIVE FAMOUS WORDS NOT FOUND IN ANY FOUNDING DOCUMENT

A great deal of confusion traces back to a single, widely misunderstood phrase: "separation of church and state." It's not found in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, or any other founding document of the United States. It actually comes from a private letter written by Thomas Jefferson in 1802, 11 years after the ratification of the First Amendment, to a group called the Danbury Baptist Association.

Jefferson himself was in France when the Constitution was drafted, and he wasn't a member of Congress when the First Amendment was passed. The phrase "wall of separation" is his own turn of phrase, offered as reassurance to a religious minority worried about government interference in their worship—not a piece of law, and not a founding constitutional principle. In it, he said,

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between church and State.¹⁷

What the founding documents actually establish is considerably narrower and, in a sense, considerably friendlier to religious engagement in public life than the popular myth suggests. The First Amendment's Establishment Clause (1791) prohibits Congress from establishing a national Church, meaning there would be no American equivalent of the Church of England, no single federally mandated denomination. The 14th Amendment (1868) later extended that same prohibition to the states, closing the door

on individual states establishing their own official churches (some states, in the earliest years of the republic, had done exactly that: Congregationalist establishments in New England, Anglican establishments in the South, and so on).

What neither document does is prohibit individual Christians, as citizens, from participating fully in political life: voting, running for office, and speaking publicly about the issues of the day, including issues the Bible addresses.

The proper way to state the principle, then, isn't that Church and state must have nothing to do with one another, but that the *state* has no authority to govern the *Church*; the traffic runs one direction. Christians, as citizens, retain every right that any other citizen has to participate in civic life; what the Church resists is the reverse arrangement, in which the government presumes to dictate what may be preached, taught, or believed inside the Church's own walls.

Rather than a "wall of separation," we should have what I call a "one-way door of separation." There should be a door between the Church and state, and it should only open one way. The Church should enter into civil matters whenever it wants. However, the door should be shut from the government entering into ecclesiastical matters. Christians are citizens of the state, so they can be involved in politics and government. Politicians and their bureaucrats who are not Christians are not part of the Church, so they cannot be involved in Church government. For this reason, Christians can fight for life and liberty, and the attorney general of a state should have no say in who the pastor is or what they preach. There should be a separation, one keeping the government out of the Church but not keeping the Church out of the government. The one-way door should exist and never be replaced with a two-way door.

SILENCE FOR ME, NOT FOR THEE

Notice how selectively the "separation of church and state" argument tends to be applied in practice. The inconsistency is itself revealing. Consider the Johnson Amendment, a provision of the U.S. tax code often cited as the reason churches and pastors should avoid discussing candidates or policy from the pulpit. Set aside the wisdom of that provision for a moment. Planned Parenthood, which is a registered nonprofit organization just like a church, brings in hundreds of millions of dollars a year in charitable donations and, unlike most churches, publishes an explicit list of political candidates it endorses in each state.

If a nonprofit organization can accept tax-deductible donations while actively endorsing candidates, then the argument that churches uniquely

must stay silent about candidates and policy starts to look less like a principled reading of the Constitution and more like a selectively applied anti-Christian bias.

The same inconsistency shows up historically along other lines. The Black Church in America has, since its founding, been consistently and openly engaged in political life; the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is only the most famous example of a long tradition of Black pastors who preached directly and explicitly about civil rights, justice, and specific political issues from the pulpit, without triggering the same “stay out of politics” objection so often raised elsewhere. This isn’t an argument against that tradition of political engagement, but quite the opposite.

It’s an argument that the principle ought to be applied consistently: either churches and pastors, across every tradition and every point on the political spectrum, have the same First Amendment freedom to speak to the moral and political issues of the day that every other citizen and every other nonprofit organization has, or none of them do. Selectively invoking “separation of church and state” only against churches whose political conclusions happen to be unwelcome because they are conservative is not a neutral constitutional principle; it’s indecent political suppression masquerading as decency.

THE CHURCH AS CONSCIENCE, NOT CHAPLAIN

There is a difference, worth naming explicitly, between a church that functions as the conscience of a nation and a church that functions merely as its chaplain, offering religious blessing to whatever the government happens to be doing, without ever risking the discomfort of genuine correction. Scripture consistently calls the Church to the former role, never to the latter. The prophets of the Old Testament were rarely popular with the kings they served under, precisely because their calling required them to name injustice plainly, regardless of whether the ruling authority welcomed the message.

Nathan confronted David. Elijah confronted Ahab. John the Baptist confronted Herod, and it cost him his life. Nathan’s entire sermon to the most powerful man in Israel was four words: “You are the man!”^a In every case, the prophetic voice wasn’t optional decoration on top of an otherwise compliant relationship with power; it was the substance of what faithfulness to God required in that moment.

A church that has fully absorbed the two-kingdoms framework this chapter has described will resist two opposite temptations. The first is *theocratic overreach*, the temptation to use the tools of the state to compel

^a 2 Samuel 12:7

religious conformity, effectively collapsing the two kingdoms back into one, exactly as happened under Henry VIII, only with the Church now attempting to wield the state's sword rather than the reverse. Unlike Islam, which converts by imposition, Christianity converts by invitation. Christian principles should be fought for by Bible-believing Christians, but the Church alone is called to reach the lost, something the state cannot do. We must not forget that the Pilgrims, who landed in America to found an experiment in government rooted in godly principles, were doing so in large part because the home they left had collapsed the two kingdoms. The second, and in many contemporary Western contexts the more common temptation, is *chaplaincy*: offering religious comfort and blessing to whatever a nation's rulers or its dominant cultural consensus already wish to do, without ever risking the social or institutional cost of genuine prophetic correction. This looks like clergy publicly serving communion to politicians who are fully committed to the slaughter of the unborn and transgender Babylonian bishops in rainbow dresses protesting law enforcement for arresting human traffickers and smugglers who have entered the country illegally. Perhaps more common and pernicious is the nice evangelical pastor tendency to say not a damn thing about anything, turning Jesus into a life coach for your personal victories as if His entire purpose was your success and self-esteem.

Both temptations betray the same underlying failure: a loss of nerve about what it actually means for the Church to be, in Scripture's own words, salt and light in a world that does not naturally want either. Light is not welcome by darkness, and an open wound does not much enjoy salt. Our world is dark and wounded. A church that has forgotten how to be a nation's conscience has, in an important sense, stopped being fully the Church, regardless of how large its membership or how prominent its buildings remain. I've driven by strip clubs in Texas that are as big and popular as the local megachurch, and I would not encourage any pastor to take notes on how to rival their "success" in the market.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE STATE RUNS THE CHURCH

History supplies a vivid illustration of what happens when that one-way door arrangement is inverted. In 1534, Henry VIII broke from the Roman Catholic Church and established the Church of England, effectively placing the Church under the authority of the civil government: one kingdom, rather than two, with the monarch as head of both.

The consequence was exactly what the two-kingdoms framework would predict: rather than the government coming to look more like the Church, the Church came to look more like the government. Citizens were required

to attend the state-approved Church or face fines. Pastors who dissented were removed from their positions. Those who spoke out could be imprisoned or publicly shamed in the stocks. Imagine how awful it would be if the federal government oversaw who your pastor could be and what they could say. I would be unemployed faster than you can say “goodbye.”

It was precisely this arrangement that drove a group of believers, later known as the Pilgrims, to leave England altogether in search of a place where the two kingdoms could exist as two kingdoms rather than one. In 1620, aboard the Mayflower, they drafted the Mayflower Compact, a founding document rooted in self-government and biblical principle, explicitly conceived as an alternative to the state-controlled Church they had fled. It said:

Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid.¹⁸

At the time the Pilgrims landed, there wasn't a single functioning democracy anywhere on earth; today, thanks in significant part to the trajectory that began with their experiment, a majority of the world's population lives under some form of democratic government.

The impulse behind the entire American experiment in religious liberty wasn't a desire to exclude Christian conviction from public life. It was the opposite: a desire to protect the Church from being swallowed by the state, precisely so that Christian conviction could be lived out freely by a government that was under God and knew it was not God.

THE CHURCH'S JOB IS VIRTUE. THE STATE'S JOB IS VICE.

One further distinction from Romans 13 deserves fuller treatment, because misunderstanding it produces a great deal of unnecessary frustration among believers. It isn't the government's job to produce virtuous citizens, and expecting it to do so sets believers up for perpetual disappointment.

Scripture divides responsibility clearly. The Church exists to promote virtue, teaching people not to lie, steal, or kill; forming conscience; modeling healthy heterosexual marriage, honest business, faithful parenting, and keeping sex for marriage. Paul describes the assignment: Christ gave the church its leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building

up the body of Christ...”^a The state exists to discourage and punish vice through law, courts, and, where necessary, the sword. These are related but distinct assignments, and confusing them produces predictable frustration in both directions. The state is in the business of less vice. The Church is in the business of more virtue.

Consider a simple, telling example: the government will issue a couple a marriage certificate, but it won’t require, or even offer, a premarital class to prepare that couple for what marriage actually demands. The government will issue a child a Social Security number, but it won’t offer new parents any meaningful preparation for the work of raising that child well. This isn’t a failure of government so much as a category error on the part of anyone who expected government to supply what only the Church, functioning as the Church, was ever designed to supply.

If you want to learn how to have a healthy marriage, the place to go isn’t a city council meeting. A city council can fix a traffic pattern or address a barking dog, but it has no competence in matters of the heart, of covenant faithfulness, or of raising children in the fear of the Lord. That competence belongs, by design, to the Church.

Recognizing this division of labor clearly is itself an act of wisdom. It keeps believers from expecting the state to do what only the Church can do, and it keeps the Church from neglecting the virtue-forming work that is properly its own responsibility, rather than outsourcing that work to institutions never equipped to carry it.

THE SWORD AND ITS LIMITS

Romans 13:4 describes civil government as bearing “the sword”: language that indicates real, even lethal, authority to punish wrongdoing. Why does Scripture grant government this authority at all? The reasoning clarifies both the legitimacy and the limits of state power.

Evil, left to itself, doesn’t restrain itself. A society with no meaningful consequence for theft, violence, or murder doesn’t become more peaceful through the absence of enforcement; it becomes considerably more dangerous, because those most willing to harm others face no deterrent. This is why Scripture treats police, courts, and even capital punishment not as regrettable necessities to be minimized wherever possible, but as legitimate expressions of a government properly fulfilling its God-given role as an “avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”^b

At the same time, this authority is explicitly bounded. The sword belongs to government because God delegated it for a specific purpose—

^a Ephesians 4:12 ^b Romans 13:4

restraining evil and protecting the innocent—not because government possesses some independent, self-generated right to use force however it wishes. A government that turns the sword against the innocent, as Pharaoh did against Hebrew infants and as Herod attempted against the infant Jesus, has stepped outside the boundary of the authority Romans 13 describes and has begun exercising the very tyranny that legitimate government exists to prevent.

This distinction—between a government using its God-given authority for its intended purpose and a government abusing that authority against the purpose for which it was given—is what makes sense of the entire biblical pattern of civil disobedience discussed earlier. Christians don't resist the government's legitimate exercise of the sword against genuine wrongdoing. They resist, when necessary, government's illegitimate use of that same sword against the innocent, the faithful, or the Church itself.

WHAT BELIEVERS OWE A GOVERNMENT THAT GETS IT WRONG

A final practical question deserves direct treatment: what does a believer owe a government that they believe, in good conscience, has gotten something seriously wrong? The biblical pattern traced above suggests an answer with several distinct layers, applied in sequence rather than all at once. Underneath all of them sits something Paul treats as first: "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions..."^a Before a Christian criticizes a government, they should already be praying for it.

The first layer is honest, respectful engagement through legitimate civic means: voting, running for office, speaking publicly, organizing, and advocating, all of which are available to Christians precisely because believers are full citizens with every right any other citizen possesses.

The second layer, where legitimate civic means prove insufficient, is principled, public disagreement: the kind of prophetic voice the Church has always been called to exercise toward the state, calling it to account for its failures without necessarily withdrawing cooperation altogether. Importantly, this includes calling to repentance our own political party when they are wrong in the eyes of God. We are not partisan. We are prophetic. God calls everyone to repentance, and so should His servants.

The third and final layer, reserved as this chapter has emphasized for the narrowest and most serious cases, is civil disobedience: refusing a specific unjust command while still generally respecting the legitimate authority of the government issuing it and accepting whatever consequence follows from

^a 1 Timothy 2:1-2

that refusal, exactly as Peter, Paul, and countless believers since have done.

What this sequence rules out, notably, are both extremes that Christians are sometimes tempted toward: reflexive, uncritical obedience to whatever a government commands, regardless of its moral content, and reflexive, habitual resistance to any authority a believer happens to find personally inconvenient. Neither extreme reflects the balanced, textually grounded pattern Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, Titus 3, and the example of the apostles themselves describe.

The biblical pattern calls for something more demanding than either extreme: sustained, sober discernment about which category a given situation falls into, exercised with humility, prayer, and a genuine desire to honor God above every other loyalty, including loyalty to one's own political preferences.

All of this was on full display during the COVID lockdowns when churches had to decide whether they would remain open or close because the government asked them to. Suddenly, the two kingdoms were in conflict, with the state telling the churches to close. At our church, as the senior pastor, it was my job to call the shots and take the shots. On one side, we had people demanding we obey the government and close the church. On the other side, we had people who were rebellious by nature showing up and wreaking anarchy at our church because we were open and they wrongly thought we were pro-lawlessness. We stayed open, had no restrictions telling adults what to do with what I consider stupid things like masks and social distancing, and livestreamed my sermons so that those who chose to stay at home could still hear the Word of God. We worshiped freely, rented carnival rides for kids to have fun in a place that had faith but not fear, and grew as a church—with no negative health consequences. We did not lay down in apathy, and we did not rise up in anarchy. We kept being the church and doing church honorably. A test like this will come again, and the principles of the Scriptures outlined in this book will be needed and tested.

WHY RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECTS EVERYONE, NOT JUST CHRISTIANS

The two-kingdoms framework carries an implication worth making explicit, because it's sometimes lost in contemporary debates: the same principle that protects the Church from state control also protects every other religious community, and even those with no religious conviction at all, from having their own beliefs dictated by whichever group happens to hold political power at a given moment.

A government with the authority to force Christian worship on non-Christians is, by the same logic, a government with the authority to compel any other form of worship, or the abandonment of worship altogether, should political winds shift. The Pilgrims who fled England weren't merely

seeking freedom for their own specific convictions; they were, whether they fully articulated it this way or not, establishing a principle that would eventually protect religious liberty far more broadly than they could have anticipated at the time. For example, as Islam overtakes neighborhoods in Michigan and Texas, including the public call to prayer being blasted on loudspeakers, I would die before converting to Islam no matter what the government says. All true Christians believe the same.

This is worth remembering whenever this argument is caricatured as a demand for Christian control over civil government: a demand for exactly the kind of one-kingdom arrangement Henry VIII represents. The biblical case is a state genuinely limited in its authority over conscience and worship, precisely so that the Church can remain free to be the Church, un-coerced and un-corrupted by political power, regardless of which party or ideology happens to hold that power in any given generation.

A Christian who understands this history rightly should be among the most consistent defenders of religious liberty and freedom of speech for everyone, not merely for those who share their own convictions, because the same one-way door that keeps the state from dictating the content of Christian worship is the same door that keeps the state from dictating the content of anyone else's convictions as well.

The question asked and debated ad nauseum is, *Was America founded as a Christian nation?* A better question would be, *Was America founded on Christian principles found in the Bible?* That answer is a simple *yes*.

6 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN THE FOUNDING OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

1. *Rights come from God, not government.* The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence from July 4, 1776, says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That is a clear echo of Romans 13. Atheists and tyrannical governments don't believe this.
2. *Because everyone is a sinner, power is better shared than centralized.* The understanding of fallen human nature divides power between three branches of government: legislative (Congress), executive (President), and judicial (Federal courts). The progressive lie that people are good and evolving to become better and better does not believe this.
3. *We have a legal system based on laws, not might, because of the Bible.* As Christianity spread through the Roman Empire, Christian bishops were given legal authority. Then, the Christian Emperor

Justinian organized a legal system that paved the way for Roman Law that led to the U.S. justice system. Evolutionary theory that says the strong should destroy the weak do not believe this.

4. *The Bible distinguishes human life from lower levels of animal and plant life for rights and justice.* The Bible says that men and women alone bear God's divine image and have dominion over animals, plants, and lower creation. Pantheism and radical animal rights activism does not believe this. Neither does Islam, which does not grant women the same rights under the law as men.
5. *Everyone is equal under law (despite race, gender, social status, or religious belief) because everyone bears God's image.* Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Eastern karma in religions like Hinduism does not believe this and instead has caste systems where different people have different rights based upon what caste they were born into. Furthermore, since suffering people are paying off their karmic debt, it is considered logically wrong to extend justice or mercy to those who are suffering.
6. *The Bible lays the basic framework for just government in places like the 10 Commandments.* When God says not to steal, He is teaching former slaves that owned nothing that there is private property. When God says not to murder, He is teaching the sanctity of human life above animal life, which can be killed for food.

You cannot arrive at these guiding principles that serve as the foundation for the United States without the Bible. Marxism does not believe this, as we will study later in this book.

Did you know that America's first president, George Washington, was a Christian who entered office by taking an oath with his hand on the Bible, then bowed and kissed it before walking with both houses of Congress to church for a two-hour worship service? Did you know that President Abraham Lincoln was later driven to abolish slavery because of his Christian convictions? The question of whether or not Christians should be involved in politics and engaged in the most vital cultural questions of the day is something pushed by those who are against God and not something Christian patriots who founded or benefited America would have even considered.

NATIONS FALL. THE CHURCH DOES NOT.

The implications of this history bear directly on ongoing debates. Policy matters because it shapes real people's lives; laws that are unjust cause real

harm, and laws that are just protect real flourishing. Simply stated, politics matter because policy matters, and policy matters because people matter. This is why the Church's engagement with civic life isn't a betrayal of the two-kingdoms principle but a legitimate exercise of it; individual believers, as citizens, have every right that any other citizen has to advocate, vote, and speak.

Nations rise and nations fall. Governments come and governments go. But Scripture is clear that the Church of Jesus Christ will continue until Christ Himself returns. Jesus said so plainly: "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."^a

And until that day, the Church's calling remains what it has always been: to proclaim the gospel that transforms individuals and, through those transformed individuals, gradually transforms nations; to be the conscience of whatever government it finds itself under; and to answer, in word and deed, the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."^b

All of this—statesmanship, citizenship, civil disobedience, the Church's proper relationship to the state—finally serves a single, more personal question the last chapter of this book will take up directly: *What does it actually look like to love the neighbor standing in front of you?*

^a Matthew 16:18 ^b Matthew 6:10, KJV

CHAPTER 5

LOYALTY TO GOD, LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

THE EXCUSE BEHIND THE EXCUSE

Ofentimes in modern moral and political debate, people might say, “The Bible says love your neighbor,” and then that command is stretched to justify almost anything. Open the border, because stopping illegal crossings isn’t loving. Defund the police, because arresting people isn’t loving. Affirm every version of a child’s confused gender and mutilate them, because saying no isn’t loving. The command to love your neighbor, in other words, gets used as a trump card to silence any biblical conviction that might complicate it.

That entire framework misunderstands what Jesus actually said. Christ’s own summary of the law places two commands in careful order: love God and love your neighbor.^a That order isn’t incidental. Loyalty belongs to God first; love flows to neighbor second and is shaped by that first loyalty rather than competing with it.

Sometimes genuine loyalty to God will look, to a watching world, like a failure to love your neighbor, because love, biblically defined, sometimes means disagreeing with someone, out of love for them, and calling them toward repentance rather than affirming them in whatever they currently believe or however they currently behave. This is why the Christian message has always centered on repentance rather than mere tolerance.

The first question in any moral or political decision is never, *What would make other people happy?* It is, *What would please my God, as revealed in His Word?* Only after that question is settled does the second question make sense: how do I communicate this truth in a way that is genuinely loving toward my neighbor? The most loving thing we can do is not agree with our neighbor but rather disagree with them in hopes that they repent and start agreeing with God.

^a Mark 12:28-31

TWO DISTINCT CALLINGS: CITIZENSHIP AND STATESMANSHIP

Scripture gives believers two related but distinct callings, and clarity about the difference between them resolves a great deal of confusion.

Christian citizenship is described in Philippians 3:20: “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a believer’s fundamental identity: their names are written, Revelation tells us, in the Lamb’s book of life. Whatever nation a Christian happens to live in, their deepest and truest citizenship belongs to another Kingdom entirely, one in which Jesus is even now reigning, surrounded by worship, awaiting the day when every believer will see Him face to face.

Christian statesmanship, by contrast, describes how a believer who already possesses heavenly citizenship is called to live as a resident of an earthly nation in the meantime. Jesus teaches His disciples to pray exactly this tension: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”^a

Scripture teaches that history, in its final analysis, resolves into only two cultures, Heaven and Hell, and that every present nation, culture, and civilization is some particular mixture of the two. The Christian’s task, as a statesman living inside that mixture, is to work and pray for more Heaven and less Hell in the specific place where God has put them. A statesman is someone who says: *Though my citizenship is elsewhere, I am a resident here, and I want to help answer Jesus’ own prayer by bringing more of His Kingdom’s culture into my city, my state, and my nation, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

This is, in fact, what genuinely loving your neighbor looks like in practice. Allowing a neighbor to pursue whatever destructive path they choose, without ever speaking a word of truth into it, is not love; it’s indifference if not hatred dressed up as tolerance. Staying silent about what Scripture teaches, out of fear that the truth will be unwelcome, isn’t loving your neighbor either. Wanting a neighbor to choose more Hell and less Heaven, and saying nothing, isn’t love. It’s a quiet form of contempt.

THE DANGER OF IMMATURE CONVICTION

In recent years, an increasingly common problem has been the rise of an entire generation of vocal cultural and political commentators who possess genuine enthusiasm for their newfound faith but very little actual grounding in it. Meeting Jesus is the starting line of the Christian life, not its finish line. A believer who hasn’t yet been meaningfully disciplined and who

^a Matthew 6:9-10

doesn't yet understand what Scripture teaches about marriage, parenting, work, finances, or civic life is poorly equipped to speak with authority on any of those subjects, however sincere their enthusiasm. It's roughly the equivalent of someone giving you your first baseball glove and declaring yourself ready for the major leagues. Genuine competence, in matters of faith just as in anything else, takes time, instruction, and practice to develop.

Paul made this a qualification for leadership, not a suggestion. Writing to Timothy about who should lead a church, he said the candidate "must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil."^a Why? Someone who recently met Jesus will likely get it wrong, and others will listen to them.

This matters because the loudest voices in any cultural debate are not always the most trustworthy ones. New believers eager to have an opinion on every controversy of the moment can do real damage to the credibility of the very convictions they're defending. In the age of online influencers—where someone with a giant platform meets Jesus and suddenly starts speaking like an expert on biblical issues they remain ignorant of—is both common and a crisis.

The antidote isn't silence, and it isn't waiting decades before engaging public life at all; Scripture's own statesmen, from Joseph to Daniel, were often remarkably young when God placed them in positions of influence. The antidote is discipleship: the patient, unglamorous work of studying Scripture, submitting to wise teaching, and growing in maturity before, and while, stepping into greater influence.

A statesman's authority to speak into the affairs of their nation grows in direct proportion to the depth of their own grounding in the Word of God, not merely in proportion to the strength of their opinions or size of their platform.

REPENTANCE, NOT TOLERANCE

The claim that Christian conviction preaches repentance rather than mere tolerance deserves closer examination, because it runs directly against one of the most deeply held assumptions of contemporary culture: the assumption that the highest form of love is unconditional affirmation and that any form of disagreement, however gently expressed, is a failure of love.

Scripture simply doesn't define love this way. Love, biblically defined, wants what is actually best for another person, even when that person doesn't currently want it for themselves—and Scripture is remarkably direct about what is actually best for every human being: repentance from sin and faith in

^a 1 Timothy 3:6

Jesus Christ, followed by a life increasingly conformed to His character and His commands. That's not a hard sell disguised as kindness. That's what God Himself wants for every person alive. As it says in 2 Peter 3:9, He is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

This means that genuine love will, at times, look to the world like intolerance, precisely because it refuses to affirm what Scripture identifies as destructive, regardless of how sincerely or passionately a person believes otherwise. A parent who refuses to hand a child a knife, no matter how much the child insists they're ready for one, isn't failing to love that child. They're loving the child correctly by prioritizing the child's actual good over the child's immediate desire. The same principle, scaled up, applies to how Christians are called to engage with cultural and political trends that Scripture identifies as harmful, even when those trends are framed in the language of compassion, inclusion, or progress.

Refusing to affirm what God has called sin is not a failure of loving your neighbor. Affirming it, out of a desire to avoid discomfort or social cost, is the actual failure, because it substitutes the comfort of the moment for the good of the person in front of you, both now and, more importantly, eternally. How much do you have to hate someone to avoid hurting their feelings but allowing them to burn in Hell forever? Cowards are not loving.

This distinction doesn't license cruelty, harshness, or contempt in how that disagreement is communicated; Scripture is equally clear that truth must be spoken "in love"^a with patience, humility, and genuine care for the person being addressed. But it does mean that kindness of tone can never be allowed to erase clarity of content. A Christian can, and should, disagree with genuine warmth, real friendship, and patient persistence. But Scripture is clear that the disagreement itself isn't optional, and abandoning it in the name of tolerance isn't actually more loving. It's simply less faithful. In personal conversations, we must try to be personable. However, in the pulpit, the senior leader thundering the word of God needs to also be prophetic because the Bible is a sword and God intends for it to do some cutting, which is painful, like surgery that removes cancer.^b

CUPBEARERS, GOVERNORS, TREASURERS, QUEENS

Scripture doesn't present political and civic involvement as a regrettable compromise for believers; it presents it as a recurring, honored calling for people who love God. The list of statesmen across both Testaments is long enough to settle the question decisively.

In the Old Testament, Joseph served as second-in-command over

^a Ephesians 4:16 ^b Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12

Egypt. Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt before becoming the founding leader of Israel. Daniel governed a province of Babylon and served three successive foreign kings as one of their most trusted administrators. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administered a Babylonian province. Nehemiah served as cupbearer to a Persian king before becoming governor of Judah for 12 years. Ezra was granted civil authority by that same Persian king to appoint judges and magistrates. Mordecai rose to be second in rank in the Persian empire, working for the welfare of his people, while Esther used her position as queen to intercede on their behalf. Obadiah served as chief steward in a wicked king's own household while secretly sheltering God's prophets. Among Israel's own leaders, Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, and Samuel all exercised national leadership; David and Solomon were kings; and Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah were reforming kings who led their nation back to God.

In the New Testament, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both members of the Jewish ruling council. Zacchaeus served as a Roman fiscal official. Cornelius was a Roman military officer. Sergius Paulus governed as a Roman proconsul. Erastus served as city treasurer of Corinth, and Paul even mentions believers within Caesar's own household.

Anyone who claims Christians should confine their faith entirely to their private hearts and stay out of every sphere of civic and political life hasn't reckoned with how much of Scripture tells the opposite story. Time and again, God places His people in positions of real civic influence and uses their presence there to bless the surrounding nation. Furthermore, you cannot truly preach the whole counsel of God's Word like Paul did^a, unless you teach what the Bible says about God and government.

A STATESMAN WHO LEFT COMFORT TO REBUILD

Two figures named briefly in the list of biblical statesmen above deserve fuller treatment, because their stories illustrate the cost and the shape of statesmanship with unusual clarity.

Nehemiah serves as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, a position of genuine trust and considerable comfort, requiring him to taste the king's wine and food to guard against poisoning and placing him in close daily proximity to one of the most powerful men on earth. When news reaches him that the wall of Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates burned, leaving the remnant of God's people in the city defenseless and disgraced, his reaction is immediate: "...I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven."^b

^a Acts 20:27 ^b Nehemiah 1:4

Grief alone, however, doesn't define Nehemiah's statesmanship. Action does. When the king notices his cupbearer's downcast face and asks the reason, Nehemiah, after a moment of silent prayer, makes a direct request: permission to leave his comfortable post in the Persian court and travel to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall himself. This effort was dangerous and had been tried and failed previously. The king grants not only permission but also material support: timber for the gates and letters of safe passage through hostile territory. Nehemiah trades a position of ease and proximity to power for the harder, dirtier work of organizing a construction project among a demoralized, resource-poor population, surrounded by neighboring officials who mock the project and eventually plot armed attacks to stop it.

What follows is one of Scripture's clearest pictures of a statesman managing a crisis under real external threat. Nehemiah organizes the work by family and section of wall, and arms half the workforce with spears and shields while the other half continues building. Scripture describes the result: "each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other."^a Despite repeated attempts at intimidation, sabotage, and even a direct assassination plot against Nehemiah himself, the wall is completed in 52 days: a feat so rapid that even Jerusalem's enemies "were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God."^b

Nehemiah goes on to serve as governor of Judah for 12 years, refusing the customary allowance of food and taxation his position entitled him to in order to avoid placing additional burden on an already struggling population.^c His statesmanship was defined not by the comfort of his original position in the Persian court, but by his willingness to leave that comfort behind, absorb real risk and real cost, and use whatever influence he had accumulated for the good of people who could offer him nothing in return.

THE LAW THAT COULD HAVE KILLED HER

Esther's story, set in the same Persian court roughly a generation earlier, offers a different but equally instructive picture of statesmanship: one exercised not through construction and administration but through courage at a single, decisive moment. Esther, a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, becomes queen of Persia without the king's court ever finding out her ethnic and religious identity. When the king's chief official, Haman, engineers a decree for the extermination of every Jew in the empire in retaliation for a personal insult from Mordecai, Esther finds herself in a

^a Nehemiah 4:17 ^b Nehemiah 6:16 ^c Nehemiah 5:14-15

position of real influence: married to the most powerful man in the world but facing a decision that could cost her everything.

Approaching the king without being summoned was, under Persian law, punishable by death unless the king extended his golden scepter in welcome, even for the queen herself. Mordecai's appeal to Esther cuts to the heart of statesmanship: "[W]ho knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"^a Esther's response models the same posture already seen in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before the furnace: genuine fear held together with resolved obedience. She said, "I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."^b

She calls for fasting among her people before she acts, then approaches the king, wins his favor, and, over the course of two carefully staged banquets, exposes Haman's plot and secures her people's deliverance. Haman, who had built gallows intended for Mordecai, is hanged on them himself, and the Jewish people are permitted to defend themselves against the decree that had been issued against them.

Esther's statesmanship looks nothing like Nehemiah's sustained 12-year governorship and nothing like Joseph's decades of administrative authority over Egypt's grain reserves. It was a single, terrifying decision, made at the one moment her position could matter most, refusing to let the comfort and safety of anonymity keep her silent when her people's survival was at stake.

Another godly woman who served God in government was Deborah, who appears in Judges 4-5. Deborah was a judge, which was unique, as she is the only female judge that is named or mentioned in the Old Testament. The judges were a temporary and interim leadership role that preceded God's people having a human king. Deborah's role included rendering legal decisions, as well as receiving battle plans from the Lord, which she then summoned Barak, Israel's military commander, to carry out—though he refused to go unless she went with him. She is also called a prophet who speaks for God by the Spirit and is a worship leader who sings praise to God after a mighty military victory. As a judge, Deborah would be something like a high-ranking judge in our day, perhaps a federal judge or member of the Supreme Court. Her involvement in military affairs would make her something like a senior White House cabinet member, such as a secretary of war or secretary of state. As a prophetess, she gave wise counsel from the Holy Spirit to various leaders who came to her. Judges 4:5 says, "She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her..." One leadership role that Deborah did not hold, however, was priest. That senior spiritual office was reserved solely for qualified men. Deborah was fierce and

^a Esther 4:14 ^b Esther 4:16

feminine, but not a feminist.

Taken together with Nehemiah, Joseph, and Daniel, the stories of Esther and Deborah complete the picture: statesmanship takes different shapes for different believers, in different seasons, with different scope and different risk. But in every case, it requires the same underlying willingness to use whatever influence God has placed in a believer's hands for the good of others, at the cost it demands, rather than waiting for a version of influence that costs nothing at all.

FIVE WAYS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

Building on this pattern, there are at least five concrete ways that cultural and political engagement functions as an act of loving your neighbor rather than a distraction from it.

First, it's loving to evangelize your neighbor. The most loving thing a Christian can do for anyone is to introduce them to Jesus Christ, even when, especially when, that conversation feels unwelcome or awkward. Withholding the gospel because someone might not want to hear it isn't kindness. It's a failure of love disguised as politeness. You cannot reach your neighbor unless you are involved in your community, and you cannot evangelize your neighbor if your faith is entirely private and not public.

Second, it's loving to disciple your neighbor toward Christ's lordship over every area of life. Simply making converts isn't enough. Helping believers understand how Christ's lordship applies to their finances, their marriages, their parenting, their politics, and their vocations is a genuine act of love, because immature or poorly disciplined faith leaves people vulnerable to being blown about by whatever cultural current is strongest. When someone is born again, they are a babe in Christ and need parenting, which is discipleship.

Third, it's loving to apply the wisdom of God's Word to every area of a nation's life. There is no square inch of culture that falls outside the lordship of Jesus Christ: not education, not entertainment, not economics, not law. To love your neighbor is to want God's wisdom brought to bear everywhere, not cordoned off into a private, spiritual compartment.

Fourth, it's loving to seek God's blessing on ourselves and our neighbors together. Blessing, biblically understood, isn't distributed arbitrarily. It follows obedience to God's revealed will. A neighbor who is pursuing sin is not being loved by silence about that sin; they are being denied the very thing that would open them to blessing. A loving neighbor points toward the King and His Word, because obedience is genuinely the best thing that could happen to anyone.

Fifth, it's loving to be a good citizen who seeks the welfare of the place

God has put you. This echoes the instruction given to the exiles in Jeremiah 29, discussed in Chapter 3: whatever city, state, or nation a believer finds themselves in, they are called to actively work for its good, understanding that its welfare and their own welfare are bound together.

EVANGELISM COMES BEFORE ACTIVISM

Returning to the ordering established at the beginning of this chapter: love God first, and love your neighbor second, in a way shaped by that first loyalty rather than competing with it. Applied to the specific subject of civic and political engagement, this ordering has a practical implication that is easy to lose amid the urgency of any given cultural or political controversy: evangelism, the plain, patient work of introducing people to Jesus Christ, remains the first and most fundamental way a Christian loves their neighbor. No amount of political engagement, however well-intentioned, can substitute for it. Paul's logic is a chain, and every link runs through someone opening their mouth: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"^a

This isn't a call to abandon civic and political engagement. It's a call to keep that engagement rightly ordered underneath a still more fundamental priority. A neighbor who votes correctly on every ballot measure but never hears the gospel hasn't, in the end, received the most important thing a Christian has to offer them. A culture that adopts every policy this book might commend, while remaining spiritually lost, still hasn't received what it most needs.

This is why Chapter 3's insistence that "the hope of the world is not political, it is spiritual" belongs alongside this chapter's case for civic engagement rather than in competition with it. The two convictions are not in tension, properly understood, because political engagement was never meant to replace evangelism. It was meant to be one expression, among several, of the same underlying love for neighbor that evangelism expresses even more directly and even more fundamentally.

If you close this book having absorbed its case for Christian statesmanship but neglect the more basic and more urgent work of introducing the people in your own life to Jesus Christ, you've taken hold of the lesser priority while letting go of the greater one. Yes, we want people to vote. Most importantly, we want them to vote for Jesus as Savior and Lord.

^a Romans 10:14

YOU CANNOT DO GOOD TO ALL

An important qualification belongs alongside this call to civic engagement: love of neighbor, biblically ordered, begins with those literally nearest to you. Augustine, the fourth-century church father, put it memorably: "...all men are to be loved equally. But since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you."¹⁹

Aquinas, the thirteenth-century church father, made a similar point even more directly:

Man becomes a debtor to other men in various ways, according to their various excellence and the various benefits received from them. On both counts God holds first place, for He is supremely excellent, and is for us the first principle of being and government. In the second place, the principles of our being and government are our parents and our country, that have given us birth and nourishment. Consequently man is debtor chiefly to his parents and his country, after God. Wherefore just as it belongs to religion to give worship to God, so does it belong to piety, in the second place, to give worship to one's parents and one's country...The worship given to our country includes homage to all our fellow-citizens and to all the friends of our country.²⁰

This has a specific and important application to the subject of this book. Nations aren't accidents; they're God's own design, established at Babel and confirmed throughout Scripture.^a If it is God's providence that determined the country of your birth, then your own nation is, quite literally, your nearest neighbor. It's the first and most immediate circle in which love of neighbor is meant to be lived out, before that love extends outward to other nations through evangelism and mission, as discussed in Chapter 1.

10 REASONS MARXISM CANNOT LOVE GOD OR NEIGHBOR

Loving your neighbor is never merely a matter of good intentions. It requires discernment about which ideas actually produce human flourishing and which merely promise it and fail as lies and false prophecies. Because an entire generation has been taught that moving toward socialism *is* what it means to love your neighbor, this chapter closes with a sustained, closely argued case that this equation is backward: that Marxism, in all its modern rebranding (e.g., socialism, communism, collectivism), is fundamentally

^a Genesis 11; Acts 17:26

incompatible with loving either God or neighbor.

First, Marxism is openly hostile to Christ and Christianity. Marx was an avowed atheist. He wrote, “The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, and humility, in a word all the qualities of the canaille [French for ‘scum’].”²¹ Christians, in Marx’s estimation, were scum. If you follow Jesus and believe the Bible, Karl Marx thought you were the lowest form of human being. Marx goes on to say,

The social principles of Christianity have now had eighteen hundred years to be developed, and need no further development...The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages, and are capable, in case of need, of defending the oppression of the proletariat, with somewhat doleful grimaces. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and for the latter all they have to offer is the pious wish that the former may be charitable.²²

Then, immediately following, Marx says,

The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short, all the qualities of the rabble, and the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread. The social principles of Christianity are sneaking and hypocritical, and the proletariat is revolutionary.²³

Read Marx’s private journals—his poems—and you get a window into his soul that is genuinely disturbing. These are not the words of a political philosopher working out an economic theory. These are the words of a man who, though he was raised Lutheran, had declared spiritual war on God and sounds very much like he’s channeling a demon:

Then I will walk triumphantly like a God through the ruins of their kingdom. Every word of mine is fire and action. My breast is equal to that of the Creator.

I am great like God, I clothe myself in darkness like him.

Thus heaven I’ve forfeited, I know it full well. My soul, once true to God, is chosen for hell.

*On myself revenge I'll proudly wreak, on that being, that enthroned Lord...I shall build my throne high overhead, cold, tremendous shall its summit be.*²⁴

Second, Marxism is a deliberate two-step process, from socialism to communism. Socialism, in its foundational form, holds that the major means of production—factories, utilities, and key industries—should be owned collectively rather than by individual business owners. Wealth, under socialism, is distributed equitably by the state. Some forms allow for personal property and limited religious freedom. Many do not.

If you are a business owner, socialism is your enemy. Communism is socialism taken to its logical conclusion. It abolishes private property entirely. Your business, your home, your inheritance—gone—only to be replaced by what Marx called a “classless society,” where everyone contributes what they can and receives what they need—in theory.²⁵

Karl Marx, in his own words, said, “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other [socialism]. Corresponding to this is a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat [working class].”²⁶

Vladimir Lenin confirmed it: “What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the ‘first,’ or lower, phase of communist society.”²⁷ Marxism is a two-step walk off a plank. Step 1: Socialism. Step 2: Communism. The men who invented it said so.

The reason the half-step exists is that no free people would vote for communism directly. So, the strategy is to make socialism palatable—to sell equity and redistribution as compassion—and use it as the ramp. Once the ramp is built, the destination becomes inevitable.

Third, Marxism is an economic theory built without mathematics. This point struck me when talking with a fellow Christian whose financial firm manages literally billions and billions of dollars. He learned investing from his father and has devoted his entire life to studying the principles of investing proven by mathematical formulas over generations. He loves Jesus and is passionate about helping people invest wisely so they can bless others, starting with their family. He made the point in a conversation that Marxism is literally not an economic theory at all because it has no data, no math, and no sense. There is a big difference between the philosophy department and the accounting department at major universities for a reason—a simple fact that Marxists overlook. It’s the equivalent of letting a hippie professor who likes pontificating about the meaning of life do your taxes. It’s madness.

The Communist Manifesto proposes a total reorganization of a nation’s economy without the kind of rigorous economic modeling any serious

financial plan would require. An economic philosophy that can't show its math shouldn't be trusted with a nation's future. For example, can you imagine sitting down with a home loan officer or retirement account broker who did not use math or tested economic theory and handing them your wealth? You don't have to believe in Jesus to reject Marxism; you only need to believe in math.

So much for what Marxism says about itself. Consider next what it sets out to dismantle.

Fourth, Marxism is explicitly hostile to the family. The Communist Manifesto calls openly for the “abolition of the family.” In chapter two of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx writes about

[A]bolition [Aufhebung] of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists. On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie [middle and upper class]. The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital. Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.²⁸

The reasoning isn't hard to trace. Men who love their wives and children will fight to protect them from government overreach in a way that isolated individuals won't. A father with a family to provide for is motivated to build and resist tyranny on their behalf. Strip away that motivation, and both the drive to build a life for generations of the family and fight to defend it from tyranny eradicates all the men who would otherwise stand up to state tyranny to defend their faith, family, and freedom. Men with a family work to provide and fight to protect. Men without families neither work nor fight.

Friedrich Engels, who co-authored *The Communist Manifesto*, also wrote a book in 1884 on family outlining what we are now seeing as the progressive deconstruction of any family concepts based upon Christian principles.²⁹ He argues for the rise of feminism, the end of husbands leading families, the entry of women into the workforce so they need not marry or be provided for, the abolition of monogamy that binds husband and wife at the center of the family, and the transfer of raising and educating children from the family to the state. With men and women now working and providing tax revenue for the government, mothers and fathers no longer raise their children or pass off an inheritance to future generations but instead both work to fund the state, which owns their land, wealth, and offspring. There is a word for this. Slavery.

Fifth, Marxism denies private property. Scripture is unambiguous on this point. The Eighth Commandment is “You shall not steal,” which presupposes that property genuinely belongs to individuals rather than to the collective or the state. For someone to steal something, there must be an owner of that private property whom they are guilty of wrongly taking from. When the state or other collective simply takes what belongs to a person, that’s theft, regardless of the political language used to justify it.

Against the Bible, *The Communist Manifesto* summarizes its own theory in a single sentence: “abolition of private property.”³⁰ Your home, your business, your savings, your land—all of it belongs to the state. This is not a fringe interpretation. It is the stated goal, written by Marx himself.

After God gave the Eighth Commandment in Exodus 20, immediately in Exodus 21-23, God gives an additional detailed series of lists about stealing. Theft, fraud, and restitution are addressed, including a fivefold restitution for a stolen ox that is sold or slaughtered, double restitution if the stolen ox is found alive in the thief’s possession, and forceful labor of the thief to the person they stole from if they are unable to repay in another way. Regarding property damage and liability, God says if your animal kills someone and you were not liable, the animal is killed and you suffer financial loss. If a fire starts on your field and extends to your neighbor, you have to repay any loss in crops as restitution. Regarding finding a stray on your property, if an animal wanders from your neighbor’s property to yours, you do not own it and must return it. Any other property you find that belongs to your neighbor must be returned. As one final example, if you kidnap a person, you are guilty of a horrific crime that can bring the death penalty.

The Old Testament includes 613 laws in the first five books, and many of those laws are about private property and God’s commands that secure it. To deny private property is to defy God.

Sixth, Marxism opposes stewardship and generational wealth. *The Communist Manifesto* also calls for the “abolition of all right of inheritance.”³¹

Material inheritance in the Old Testament follows clear succession patterns designed to preserve family wealth and property. When a man died without a son, his property passed to his daughter; absent daughters, it went to his brothers; lacking brothers, it transferred to his father’s brothers; and if none existed, it went to the nearest relative within his clan.^a The firstborn son held a privileged position, receiving a double portion of the father’s estate, a right that remained fixed regardless of which wife bore him.^b This legal framework ensured continuity and protected family interests across generations. The wisdom tradition emphasizes that a righteous person’s legacy extends beyond immediate children to grandchildren, while the

^a Numbers 27:8-11 ^b Deuteronomy 21:15-17

wealth accumulated through wickedness ultimately benefits the righteous.^a

Spiritual inheritance reframes this concept within God's redemptive work. Believers obtain an inheritance through Christ according to God's predetermined purpose, with the Holy Spirit serving as a guarantee of their future possession of this inheritance.^b This inheritance functions as a reward from the Lord for faithful service to Christ.^c Rather than property or possessions, the spiritual inheritance represents believers' future participation in God's kingdom and the fulfillment of salvation's promises.

The progression from material to spiritual inheritance reflects Scripture's movement from earthly stewardship to eternal reward—both grounded in God's sovereign design and both demanding faithfulness from those who receive them. Marxism rooted in atheism has no concept of eternal punishment or reward as inheritance, which explains why it also negates any earthly inheritance as reward. God motivates obedience, godliness, and stewardship with the promise of inheritance that is material on earth and spiritual in Heaven. To deny inheritance is to defy God.

Those are the claims and the targets. What follows is the record.

Seventh, wherever Marxism has actually been implemented, it has resulted in mass death at the hands of the very governments that promised to liberate the people. Historical estimates suggest that somewhere between 60 and 100 million citizens of communist nations were killed by their own governments during the 20th century alone, with exact figures difficult to establish precisely because communist regimes have rarely been forthcoming about their own crimes. Historical estimates suggest that somewhere between 60 and 100 million citizens of communist nations were killed by their own governments during the 20th century alone. Exact figures are difficult to establish, in part because communist regimes have rarely been forthcoming about their own crimes.

- China: 40 to 80 million
- The Soviet Union: 6 to 20 million
- North Korea: 1 to 3 million, roughly 15 to 25 percent of its population
- Cambodia: 1.5 to 2 million, likewise around a quarter of its population³²

An ideology should be judged by its actual results, not by the promises made on its behalf. By that standard, Marxism's record isn't one of loving your neighbor; it's one of the deadliest ideologies in recorded human history.

Eighth, Marxism seeks to control education in order to shape future

^a Proverbs 13:22 ^b Ephesians 1:11-14 ^c Colossians 3:24

generations away from God, family, and country. Scripture emphasizes parental responsibility as foundational to a child's spiritual formation and lifelong character. The principle that early training shapes a person's trajectory throughout life^a appears throughout biblical wisdom literature, reflecting the conviction that childhood instruction carries lasting consequences. The method of transmission matters as much as the content. Parents are called to internalize God's instruction themselves and then communicate it to their children through constant, natural conversation—during daily routines, travel, and rest.^b This approach emphasizes integration into everyday life rather than formal instruction alone. Similar language appears elsewhere, describing how parents should embed these teachings into their own character and then pass them to their children through ongoing daily conversations.^c Fathers are explicitly warned against provoking anger while simultaneously being directed to raise children through both discipline and instruction rooted in the Lord^d—making fathers and not governments primarily responsible for the education of the next generation. Fathers, of course, can include others to teach their child, but the child is the responsibility of the parents starting with the father and not the state.

Education appears explicitly three times in the *Manifesto*, all within Part II, "Proletarians and Communists." It says something benign today but radical in its day: "Free education for all children in public schools."³³ Anticipating objection, Marx and Engels then say, "But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations, when we replace home education by social. And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools...?"³⁴

And then, they decisively state their long-term goal is to sever the parents as the primary influence for the raising and training of children: "The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class."³⁵

Education in America was, for most of the nation's history, Christian. It was the Christians who invented the printing press and language translation and encouraged literacy so people could read the Bible. Nearly every one of the first 123 colleges and universities in America was Christian. The earliest printed account of Harvard is a promotional pamphlet published in London in the 1640s under the title *New Englands First Fruits*. It reproduces the college's rules. The second reads:

Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to

^a Proverbs 22:6 ^b Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ^c Deuteronomy 11:18-19 ^d Ephesians 6:4

consider well, the maine end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternall life, Joh. 17.3. and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning.³⁶

The third rule required every student to read Scripture twice daily and to give his tutor an account of his progress in it, saying, “both in Theoreticall observations of Language and Logick, and in practicall and spirituall truths.”³⁷ The founding rationale stated in the same pamphlet was the fear of leaving “an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust.”³⁸ The first general school law in what became the United States declares its purpose in its opening clause:

It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures ... and that Learning may not be buried in the graves of our fore-fathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our indeavors: it is therefore ordered by this Court and Authoritie therof...³⁹

The education plan was clear: every township of fifty households was to appoint someone to teach reading and writing, and every township of one hundred was to establish a grammar school preparing students for the university. The stated end of universal literacy was the reading of Scripture.

Forty years later at the national level, the Confederation Congress used the same logic in the ordinance governing the territory that became five states:

Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.⁴⁰

Why are schools to be encouraged? Because religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government. As an aside, “religion,” in this instance, is the Christian religion with various denominations.

Controlling education is the way for a tyrannical state to control the future. Children believe what they are told and generally assume the adults around them know what they are talking about, which makes them the most efficient possible target for reshaping a culture’s convictions across a single generation. This is why the fight over parental rights in education, including issues like school choice, isn’t a peripheral political skirmish but a direct continuation of the broader conflict described here. Scripture assigns that formation to parents, not to the state: “Train up a child in the way he should

go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”^a The question isn’t whether children will be trained; it’s who does the training.

The way to redistribute wealth and capital includes defining some groups as victims and then creating a ruse called “social justice” for the government to take money and power from some groups of people and give it to others. If anyone objects, you must slander them with terms like “racist,” “bigot,” “privileged,” “Islamophobic,” “homophobic,” “transphobic,” “chauvinistic,” or “patriarchial.” If they are Christians, you should just make them feel bad and demand they apologize for not being nice and surrendering to evil. This explains why the National Education Association maintains a Center for Racial and Social Justice and publishes a Racial Justice in Education Framework, committing it to “end the systemic patterns of racial inequity and injustice.”⁴¹ The NEA Handbook says, “[E]ducators must acknowledge the existence of white supremacy culture as a primary root cause of institutional racism, structural racism, and white privilege,” and commits the Association to advocate for “the eradication of institutional racism and white privilege perpetuated by white supremacy culture.”⁴² The NEA funded a study critiquing, among other things, “empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression.”⁴³

Since 1990, nearly all dollars from the two largest teachers’ unions have gone solely to Democratic candidates and causes.⁴⁴ Pew Research Center reports that 58 percent of public K-12 teachers identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party and 35 percent toward the Republican Party.⁴⁵ Today, the Democratic Socialists of America are a rising generation of Marxist leaders seeking to steer the nation into socialism and communism.⁴⁶ The two documents carrying the most weight for the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) are the *DSA Constitution* and *Workers Deserve More*. Neither mentions God, the church, Christianity, or the Bible. The word “religion” appears in both documents only inside anti-discrimination language.

The Religion and Socialism Commission, founded in 1974, states that it “refuses to cede the ground of faith to the religious right” and functions as a “bridge group” into faith communities.⁴⁷ Its public statement of purpose describes creating “a pluralistic, welcoming, safe, and inclusive space for people of faith in the socialist movement...”⁴⁸ The same statement names “the long fight against Christian nationalism” as a purpose—the one place where the Commission sets itself against a form of American Christianity by name.

DSA’s founder Michael Harrington was a self-professed atheist who

^a Proverbs 22:6

wrote a full-length study of what he called the death of the “societal God of the Judeo-Christian West.”⁴⁹ DSA’s own program echoes the themes of *The Communist Manifesto*. Its stated purpose is to “[e]stablish public ownership of the largest corporations and essential industries to ensure democratic control and accountability to the people.” The program’s opening narrative describes a future in which “[f]ood, education, energy, medicine, and transportation aren’t for-profit businesses; they are common goods and utilities,” and in which the reader has no mortgage and no landlord “because comfortable housing is a human right.” It continues: “Stop gender violence and end policies that oppress bodily autonomy and intimate life, including patriarchal restrictions on abortion, childbirth and childraising, gender expression and transition, marriage, and divorce.”⁵⁰ The healthcare plank guarantees “complete access to reproductive and gender-affirming care” at no cost.⁵¹ Murder of preborn children and mutilation of born children without restriction fully funded by taxes is the stated goal.

Regarding private education, including Christian schools, they forbid public money from going to religious schools while only permitting it for secular schools. The barrier is written as saying dozens of states retain “the specific prohibitions in their state constitutions against sending public money to religious schools.” An earlier DSA piece lists homeschooling alongside charter schools and educational entrepreneurship as elements of “the assault on public education,” saying, “For more than two decades the assault on public education has been underway; it shows no sign of slowing down. From redirecting public funds from community schools to public and for-profit charters and home schooling to the growth of educational entrepreneurship...public education...has suffered multiple hits.”⁵² Did you catch that? What is “homeschooling”? It is “assault.” They also promise to “provide free, quality public education from pre-K to college and cancel all student debt.”⁵³

The stated final goal is heaven on earth without God, the same demonic spirit of Babylon we study in this book. They say, “If we lived in a classless society and governed ourselves, we could freely build a world without war or poverty.”⁵⁴ That is the same term Marx used to name his own theory in a 1852 letter—the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a “classless society.”⁵⁵ In a nation built under God, the concluding sentence chillingly declares “complete victory will require building a new society from the ground up.”

Ninth, and worth noting simply as a matter of intellectual honesty: Marxism’s own founders were remarkably unable to live by their own doctrine. Marx spent roughly 14 years writing his major work on economics without holding a job.⁵⁶ Of his seven children, only three survived to adulthood; the rest died of poverty and malnutrition, and two of his

daughters later took their own lives. Marx employed one household worker in his life, whom he never paid, and with whom he fathered a child he never acknowledged and never supported. His own wife suffered repeated breakdowns under the strain of his household. And the entire project was financed not by any income Marxism itself generated, but by the inherited wealth of Friedrich Engels' own Christian, capitalist family, meaning the ideology that declared war on Christianity and capitalism alike was funded, from its very first page, by both.

Tenth, taken together, none of this constitutes loving your neighbor. It's the opposite: an ideology hostile to God, to family, to private property, to generational stewardship, and, wherever it has actually been tried, to human life itself.

Several years ago, I sent my son to Arizona State University, one of the largest and most influential universities in the nation, to study international business. He came home after his very first class and told me he wasn't going back. I asked him why, and he said the professor had opened the semester's economics instruction by handing out copies of *The Communist Manifesto*, not as a historical artifact to be critically examined alongside its documented human cost, but as the foundational text of the course. My son asked whether they'd be discussing the murders committed by regimes built on that philosophy. The answer was no; they'd only be discussing the philosophy itself. He asked whether they'd be discussing how Marx treated his own wife and children, or how he lived, or how he funded the whole project off his wealthy friend Friedrich Engels rather than any labor of his own. Again, no. Needless to say, my son didn't finish his degree at that university.

This small, personal story illustrates something larger about how this ideology continues to propagate: not chiefly through force in nations like the United States, but through education systems that present its foundational texts without their foundational costs—exactly the eighth mark named above, the capture of the next generation's formation.

An economic philosophy whose own founder couldn't sustain his family, and whose global implementation has cost more lives than any competing ideology in recorded history, deserves to be taught with that full context attached, not stripped of it and presented as a neutral, untested set of interesting ideas.

THE REAL QUESTION BEHIND EVERY POLITICAL CHOICE

This extended case study is not offered as an exercise in partisan point-scoring. It's here because political and cultural engagement isn't a departure from loving your neighbor; it's one of the clearest ways that love can be expressed or betrayed. An idea that promises compassion while producing

dependency, that promises equity while producing tyranny, and that promises liberation while producing mass death wherever it has been tried cannot be called loving—no matter how sincerely its advocates believe in it.

Discernment about which ideas actually serve human flourishing is itself an act of love for your neighbor. Arguably, it's one of the most consequential acts of love available to a single generation, because the ideas a culture embraces determine the conditions under which every neighbor in that culture will live, raise children, worship, and build a future.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE STATE OWNS EVERYTHING

If you want to know what it looks like when the government owns everything, read Exodus. The new pharaoh owned everything, wanted to murder babies, and enslaved God's people, denying them religious freedom. The same demonic spirit at work in Exodus is at work in Marxism.

Policies that begin modestly (e.g., rent controls, expanded eminent domain, escalating restrictions on what a property owner may do with their own land, and ever-rising property taxes) often present themselves as compassionate correctives to market unfairness. But the trajectory these policies describe, if followed to its logical endpoint, does not stop at fairness. It ends with the state, rather than the individual, as the effective owner of what was once private property. Marxist governments have a very visible pattern of taking a minor problem, amplifying it for public outrage, and then stepping in to take over wherever the minor problem was, which then makes the overreach, expansion, and inefficient control of the government a much bigger problem than what it sought to remedy in the first place. Wise people know that most of the time the government is part of the problem and not the solution.

A homeowner who can't set their own rent, sell on their own terms, or use their own land without extensive government permission doesn't really own that property in any meaningful sense; the title may say one name, but the effective control belongs to whoever holds the levers of regulation. If you are paying high property taxes to keep land you own, do you really own it, or are you forever renting it from the state, who is the actual owner? We personally know multiple people in our former state of Washington who have seen their property taxes jump so high so fast that they had to sell their home because they could not afford it. This includes years where the property tax goes up 10%, and the value of homes is only half of that at 5%—meaning the government makes more on your home than you do!⁵⁷

Other people, usually older folks who have been faithfully paying off their mortgage for years and are nearing the end, have seen their property taxes become three or four times as high as their monthly mortgage. To

anyone paying attention, if you pay off your home and keep spending increasing property taxes to the government, then you truly do not own your home and are renting it from the government forever without exception.

This is precisely why the Eighth Commandment matters as much for economic policy as it does for individual conduct. “You shall not steal”^a presupposes that there is something to steal—that property genuinely belongs to someone before it can be taken from them. A government that takes what belongs to a citizen through regulation and confiscation rather than through direct theft has still taken what does not belong to it, and calling the process “policy” rather than “theft” doesn’t change its substance. A thief with a gun and a government with a tax bill are still both thieves.

STEWARDSHIP AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO BOTH GREED AND CONFISCATION

Before that critique stands alone, it’s worth clarifying that the biblical alternative to collectivism isn’t an uncritical endorsement of greed, exploitation, or indifference toward the poor. Scripture is every bit as pointed in its condemnation of the wealthy who oppress or neglect the vulnerable as it is in its defense of private property; the prophets repeatedly denounce those who “grind the faces of the poor”^b and who withhold wages from laborers.^c

There is a major theme in Scripture of not abusing wealth and power, and it comes not from Marxism but from the ethic of the Kingdom of God, which will be our eternal home and model for a perfectly governed culture.^d The biblical vision isn’t a defense of unrestrained accumulation for its own sake; it’s a vision of stewardship: the conviction that everything you own is ultimately entrusted to you by God, to be used generously, wisely, and in service of others, rather than hoarded selfishly or redistributed by force. Stewardship in the Bible is not worshiping wealth, but worshiping God with your wealth. In the Bible, God and not government owns everything. God entrusts to us wealth to steward, starting by tithing as a reminder of who we are dependent upon. This is why the United States, which has a lot of Christians and Christian influence, is among the most charitable nations on earth. Private charitable giving is markedly higher in the United States than in either Communist or post-Communist states. For example, the charitable giving in the United States is 20 times greater than China!^e

This distinction matters because it prevents the argument of this chapter from being misunderstood as a simple defense of capitalism against socialism with no further moral content. A Christian is a Christian first and

^a Exodus 20:15 ^b Isaiah 3:15 ^c James 5:4 ^d Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 15:7–8; Job 29:12–17; Psalm 41:1; Psalm 82:3–4; Proverbs 14:31; Proverbs 21:15; Proverbs 29:7; Proverbs 31:8–9; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 58:6–7; Jeremiah 22:3; Amos 5:11–12; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 7:9–10; James 1:2

a capitalist second. The biblical case being made here is narrower and, in an important sense, more demanding than either simple alternative: private property is legitimate and protected by the Eighth Commandment, but it's never described in Scripture as an end in itself, and its legitimate owners remain fully accountable to God for how generously and faithfully they steward it. We should be Christian conservatives—in that order. We should also be Christian capitalists—in that order.

A wealthy believer who withholds his tithe, lets churches and ministries go unfunded, and hoards resources while neighbors go hungry has failed just as surely as a government that confiscates what does not belong to it. Both represent a failure of the same underlying calling—to hold what God has entrusted to us with open hands, ready to bless others, rather than gripping it either through selfish accumulation or surrendering it to coercive redistribution. The biblical answer to inequality and need has never been confiscation by the state. It's generosity flowing voluntarily from transformed hearts, which is precisely why the Church's work of discipleship matters as much for economic questions as for any other area of life.

The scenes from the early Church are not socialism but generous stewardship. Progressive “Christians” try to make the argument from Acts chapters 2 and 4 that the first Christians were Marxists who disbelieved in private property ownership. That is simply an abuse of the Bible. Acts 2:44–45 says, “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” When it says people willfully sold and shared “their possessions,” it is describing godly stewardship and generosity, not collective ownership. Acts 4:32–35 says,

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common...There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

This reports clear private property ownership. Christians owned personal property, including land, and either gave it away to help fellow Christians in need or sold it and donated the proceeds to the Church to help care for those in crisis because of a season of economic downturn. This was not the government seizing all property or even the Christians having any economic interaction with the state. This is not prescribed by God as a universal command but rather described as something the believers chose to do at that time. This practice was confined to the church in Jerusalem, which

served as the headquarters for the Church and was facing a financial crisis at the time; it does not extend to any other New Testament church. Today, for example, if there was a headquarters for a denomination that was destroyed by a natural disaster, you would not be surprised to see individual Christians and local churches doing generous and sacrificial things to help alleviate the crisis for brothers and sisters by faith. Collectivism has no God and thinks the state is God. The Church loves God and does not need the state to tell it what to do because God already has.

A Christian should, according to the Bible, work hard and honestly, steward wisely, give to God, and find ways to bless fellow Christians who are not lazy deadbeats but have genuine needs. Today, this would include helping a single mom in your church who is working hard to feed and house her kids, paying for counseling to help the veteran trying to recover from war trauma, and giving your extra vehicle to the Christian sister who needs to drive to cancer treatment. There is a massive difference between a godly person giving something and an ungodly government stealing it.

WHAT A WISE MAN LEAVES BEHIND

One further thread from the case against Marxism deserves its own reflection, because it connects directly back to the themes of family, dominion, and blessing introduced in Chapter 1. Proverbs 13:22 teaches that “[a] good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children,” a vision of multi-generational blessing that stands in direct opposition to any ideology built on the abolition of inheritance. The instinct to work, save, build, and pass something meaningful to the next generation isn’t a vice to be redistributed away. It’s one of the primary engines God built into the cultural mandate itself, first given in Genesis 1:28.

A father who wants his son to inherit not just money but wisdom, and not just wisdom but faith, is living out exactly the pattern Scripture commends. A society organized to strip that motivation away, however compassionate its rhetoric, is working directly against one of the deepest and most productive instincts God placed in human beings.

Multi-generational blessing, like a grandfather who lives to see his grandchildren and perhaps even his great-grandchildren walking in the same faith, is not a peripheral hope. It’s close to the center of what godly statesmanship is for: more Heaven, across more generations, in the specific place God has placed a family to live and build. What drives good men and women to be good stewards, work hard, invest well, and accumulate wealth is to pass on businesses, land, money, and wisdom that comes through faith to as many future generations of their family as possible. For the Christian, our goal should not be to take all we can and then die. Our goal is to bless as

many as we can for as long as we can so that we are still a blessing when we are no longer living on earth.

HEAVEN, AND WHY IT CHANGES HOW YOU SEE EVERYTHING ELSE

There's a reason the argument about citizenship began with Heaven, and it's worth returning to before this book's argument is complete. Everything said here about loving your nation, engaging civic life, resisting unjust ideologies, and building for future generations only makes sense within a larger horizon: this world, however loved and however faithfully stewarded, isn't the final chapter.

Revelation promises that God Himself "will wipe away every tear" from the eyes of His people^a; every grief, every loss, every disappointment this life has produced will be personally addressed by the nail-scarred hands of the very Savior who died to secure that ending. 1 Corinthians 13:12 promises that believers will see Christ "face to face," not merely reading about Him in a book, but standing before Him in person, fully known and fully healed, with every question finally answered and every wound finally closed.

This isn't an escape from the responsibilities described across these five chapters. It's their proper foundation. A Christian who has genuinely grasped that their deepest citizenship is secure in Heaven is freed, rather than excused, from the anxious, grasping way so much of modern political life is conducted: the sense that every election, every policy fight, and every cultural battle is a final, existential stake.

It isn't. The final outcome of history was settled at Jesus' cross and the empty tomb, and everything described in the preceding chapters like statesmanship, civic engagement, resistance to tyranny, and faithful building across generations is meaningful and urgent work precisely because it isn't, in the end, the last word. That security is what allows a Christian to engage the political and cultural life of their nation with courage rather than despair and with hope rather than bitterness; they can contend seriously for what is good and true in the present, while never forgetting that the present isn't, finally, all there is.

CLOSING THE ARGUMENT

This book began with a single claim: that loving God and loving your country aren't competing loyalties but a single, coherent way of living under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This final chapter has argued that all of it—citizenship, statesmanship, civic engagement, and even the discernment to

^a Revelation 21:4

reject ideologies that only masquerade as love—is finally an expression of the same two commands Jesus named as the greatest of all: love God and love your neighbor.

This means the question was never really, *Should a Christian care about politics?* The question is whether the neighbor in front of you—the one who votes differently, the one who has never heard the gospel, the one who will inherit whatever your generation builds or squanders—is someone you are willing to love enough to tell the truth to and to labor for.

CONCLUSION

THY KINGDOM COME

THE ARGUMENT IN FULL

This book opened with a simple observation: the whole world seems to understand that loving your country is a normal, healthy human instinct—except, curiously, when the country in question is the United States, and the person doing the loving is also a follower of Jesus Christ. I've tried to answer that strange double standard not with political theory or cultural grievance, but with Scripture itself, beginning on the first page of Genesis and ending with the last page of Revelation.

The case, taken as a whole, runs like this.

God created nations. He didn't create globalism; godless people in rebellion against Him did. And when humanity attempted to build a single, borderless, godless government at Babel, He judged that attempt and scattered its builders into the distinct peoples, languages, and lands we now call nations. That same theology of nationhood continues through the book of Exodus, where the presence or absence of Spirit-filled statesmen in government proves to be the difference between flourishing and tyranny. The language of life, liberty, and government by the consent of the governed under God, first modeled in the exodus itself, would later become the theological vocabulary of the American founding.

Because nations are capable of drifting badly, Scripture also supplies a sober, honest theology for living faithfully inside a culture that has gone wrong. It traces the recurring spirit of Babylon from Nimrod through Daniel's exile to its final defeat in Revelation and offers, through Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, a concrete and hopeful plan for building a life of faith even when the surrounding culture offers little reason for optimism.

Because the Church and the state aren't the same institution, Scripture also lays out, primarily through Romans 13, the proper relationship between them: two kingdoms, under one Lord, each with a distinct assignment,

neither one collapsed into the other, and civil disobedience reserved as a last resort rather than a first response.

And because all of this ultimately serves the single command Jesus named as the greatest of all—love God, and love your neighbor—the final chapter argued that political and civic engagement, rightly ordered, isn't a departure from loving your neighbor but one of its clearest expressions. Ideologies that promise compassion but produce dependency, tyranny, and death can't be called loving, no matter how sincerely they're believed.

WHAT THIS BOOK HAS NOT ARGUED

It's worth being just as clear about what I haven't tried to say in this book as about what I have.

I'm not claiming that any nation, including the United States, is beyond criticism or immune from the Church's prophetic responsibility to call it toward repentance. Chapter 4 was explicit on this point: the Church's calling is to be the moral conscience of the state, not its cheerleader, and that calling doesn't change depending on which political party happens to hold power in a given decade.

I'm also not claiming that Christian citizenship in any earthly nation approaches, in importance, a believer's true citizenship in Heaven. Chapter 5 was equally explicit that a Christian's deepest identity and highest allegiance belong to the Kingdom of God, and that every earthly nation is, at best, a temporary and imperfect residence rather than a final home.

And I'm not claiming that political engagement can substitute for the gospel or that better policy alone can produce the kind of transformation only the Holy Spirit can accomplish in a human heart. Chapter 3 was direct about this: the hope of any nation isn't fundamentally political but spiritual.

What I have argued, consistently and from Scripture, is narrower and more modest than any of those larger claims and is still significant: a Christian who loves Jesus Christ has no biblical reason to be ashamed of also loving their country and has every biblical reason to engage the civic and political life of that country as one concrete expression of loving their God and neighbor.

That's the whole of the argument. It doesn't settle every specific policy question a believer might face. It doesn't tell you how to vote in a given election. And it doesn't resolve every difficult case that will inevitably arise when biblical conviction meets the genuine complexity of governing a diverse, fallen world.

What it offers instead is a framework. It offers a way of reading Scripture, and through Scripture, a way of reading the world that takes seriously both halves of the Great Commandment at once: to love God with

everything and to love your neighbor, including one's national neighbor, as yourself.

STATESMANSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

If there's a single word I've returned to more often than any other, it's *statesmanship*: the conviction that a Christian's citizenship in Heaven doesn't exempt them from responsibility in the nation where God has placed them, but rather equips and obligates them for it.

A statesman isn't necessarily someone who holds elected office, though some believers, like Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Esther before them, will be called to exactly that kind of visible, formal influence. A statesman is, more broadly, anyone who takes seriously the assignment given to Adam in the garden and renewed in every generation since: to exercise whatever measure of dominion and influence God has entrusted to them—in a household, a business, a school board, a neighborhood association, a church, or a nation—in a way that brings more of Heaven's culture and less of Hell's into the specific place where they live.

This is, in the end, a deeply hopeful vision, even though this book has not shied away from naming the genuine darkness present in any culture, ancient or modern. It's hopeful because it doesn't locate the ultimate outcome of history in the hands of any political party, movement, or ideology, but in the hands of the God who has already revealed, through Scripture, exactly how the story ends.

Babylon falls. Every empire built on Babel's original ambition eventually collapses under its own weight. And Christ returns, gathering to Himself a people from every nation, tribe, and language, finally accomplishing what no human government has ever managed to accomplish on its own: perfect unity, without the loss of a single distinct nation, under a single righteous King. This is the scene John saw, the one we started with: "[A] great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..."^a

A WORD TO THE DISCOURAGED READER

Finishing the pages of this book, you might feel energized, ready to take up the mantle of statesmanship. Or, you might be feeling something closer to fatigue, aware of how far culture has drifted from the vision Scripture describes, and uncertain whether your faithfulness can

^a Revelation 7:9

meaningfully change anything at all. Both responses deserve a direct word before this book closes.

If you're feeling ready and energized, remember Chapter 5's caution about immature conviction. Zeal without depth of discipleship burns hot and fades fast, or worse, does real damage to the credibility of the very convictions it means to defend. Let this book be the beginning of deeper study, not a substitute for it. Return to Scripture referenced throughout these chapters, read them in their fuller context, and let genuine, patient discipleship shape how that energy gets expressed.

If you're discouraged—wondering whether one life, one family, one vote, or one act of faithful building can possibly matter against the scale of the challenges discussed here—remember Daniel. He was a teenage prisoner of war with no political power whatsoever who nonetheless remained faithful for 69 years and is remembered, millennia later, as one of the great statesmen in all of Scripture. Not because he changed Babylon's government through political maneuvering, but because he remained faithful long enough for God to use his life in ways he could not have predicted from inside his own captivity.

Remember Joseph, sold into slavery by his own family, who couldn't have known that his faithfulness in prison was preparing him for a role that would save an entire region from famine. Remember the Pilgrims, a small, persecuted minority with no institutional power at all, whose flight from a state-controlled church became the seedbed for religious liberty on an entire continent. Paul wrote the same to a church that couldn't see its own harvest either, saying, "...let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."^a

None of these figures could see, from where they stood, how their faithfulness would eventually be used. That's the whole point: statesmanship isn't measured by visible results in a single lifetime. It's measured by faithfulness, offered to God, and trusted to Him for whatever harvest He chooses to bring from it in this generation, or the next, or the one after that.

A FINAL WORD ON TONE

The United States recently celebrated the nation's 250th anniversary, and it seems fitting to close by discussing that occasion and what it means for the nation my family and I live in and for your nation.

A quarter of a millennium is a long time for any nation to endure. It's longer still for a nation built, however imperfectly, on the conviction that rights come from God rather than government, that liberty exists to be

^a Galatians 6:9

stewarded rather than merely enjoyed, and that a people willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to a cause greater than their own comfort can, with God's blessing, build something genuinely lasting. Whatever this nation's failures, and I haven't pretended there are none, its endurance across 250 years is itself a testimony worth marking with gratitude rather than mere critique.

THE PRAYER THAT FRAMES THE WHOLE BOOK

Nearly every chapter of this book has returned, in one form or another, to the same six words Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."^a That prayer is the proper frame for everything this book has argued.

It isn't a prayer for the abolition of nations. It isn't a prayer for the political triumph of any single nation over all others. It is a prayer that the character of Heaven, like justice, mercy, truth, and love, would take deeper root in whatever nation, city, and household a believer happens to call home, until the day it takes root everywhere, fully and finally, at the return of the very King in whose name that prayer is offered.

Until that day comes, the calling of every Christian statesman remains the same one this book opened with: to love God first, and in loving Him, to love your neighbor. That starts with your spouse and kids, then with the household nearest to you, extending to the nation God sovereignly placed you in, and reaching, through the same gospel that changed your own heart, to every nation still waiting to hear it.

Over every nation stands a Kingdom. Over every ruler stands the King of Kings. And over every believer, wherever they have been sent, stands the same simple, demanding, and ultimately hopeful calling: to live with love in their heart and steel in their spine, as a faithful citizen of Heaven and a faithful statesman on earth, until Jesus returns.

^a Matthew 6:10, KJV

ENDNOTES

1. Johnny Cisneros, "What They Don't Tell You in Church: Babel," ed. John D. Barry, *Bible Study Magazine: November–December 2010* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 26.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), chap. 2, "Proletarians and Communists."
3. Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson, "Humanist Manifesto II," *The Humanist* 33, no. 5 (September/October 1973): 4–9.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 12.
7. <https://www.egypttoursportal.com/en-us/the-ouroboros-symbol/>
8. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/beyond-king-tut/>
9. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).
10. Endangered Species Act of 1973, Pub. L. No. 93-205, signed into law December 28, 1973.
11. Carole Novielli, "Since Roe, an estimated 66 million preborn babies have died by abortion," Live Action News, updated July 4, 2026, <https://www.liveaction.org/news/66-million-abortions-estimated-since-roe>.
12. U.S. Census Bureau, "State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020–2025," Vintage 2025 estimates, released January 27, 2026, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/pepest/2020s-state-total.html>
13. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 1774–1789, July 4, 1776.
14. Benjamin Franklin, "Proposal for the Great Seal of the United States," before August 14, 1776, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 22 (New Haven: Yale University Press), <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-22-02-0330>.
15. John Adams to Abigail Adams, August 14, 1776, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2:96–97.
16. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samuel Moore (1888), chap. 2, "Proletarians and Communists," measure 10, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 6, *Marx and Engels: 1845–48* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976).
17. Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, January 1,

- 1802, Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Papers.
18. The Mayflower Compact (November 11, 1620), as recorded in William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*.
19. Augustine of Hippo, "On Christian Doctrine," in *St. Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. F. Shaw, vol. 2, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 530.
20. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 9 (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, n.d.), 569.
21. Karl Marx, "The Communism of the *Rheinischer Beobachter*," *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung*, September 12, 1847, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 231.
22. Karl Marx, "The Communism of the *Rheinischer Beobachter*," *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung*, September 12, 1847, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 231; https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2024-11-20/marx-against-bread-and-religion-socialism?language_content_entity=en
23. Karl Marx, "The Communism of the *Rheinischer Beobachter*," *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung*, September 12, 1847, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 231; <https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1847/09/12.htm>
24. Karl Marx, early poetry (c. 1837–1841), as cited in Richard Wurmbrand, *Marx & Satan* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1986). Original poems appear in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1975).
25. Karl Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer, London, 5 March 1852, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, vol. 39, *Letters 1852–55* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), 62.
26. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Part IV. For a modern edition see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970).
27. Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917), ch. 5, sec. 4. For a modern edition see V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1932).
28. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). For a modern edition see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,

- The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).
29. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan* (1884).
30. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samuel Moore (1888), pt. 2, "Proletarians and Communists," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, vol. 6, 1845–48 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 498.
31. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, pt. 2, in *Collected Works*, 6:505.
32. Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
33. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samuel Moore (1888), pt. 2, "Proletarians and Communists," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, vol. 6, 1845–48 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 505.
34. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, pt. 2, in *Collected Works*, 6:502.
35. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, pt. 2, in *Collected Works*, 6:502.
36. *New Englands First Fruits* (London: Printed by R. O. and G. D. for Henry Overton, 1643), 26, "Rules, and Precepts that are observed in the Colledge," no. 2. Reprinted in Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), app. D.
37. *New Englands First Fruits*, 27, "Rules, and Precepts," no. 3.
38. Harvard University Archives, "Early Harvard Curriculum," Harvard Library Research Guides, accessed August 21, 2026, <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hua/earlycurriculum>.
39. "Old Deluder Satan Law" (Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1647), in *The Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of the Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1648); transcription published by the Trial Court Law Libraries, Massachusetts Court System, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/old-deluder-satan-law/download>.
40. *An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North-West of the River Ohio* (July 13, 1787), art. 3, in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al., 34 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904–37), 32:340.
41. National Education Association, "Racial Justice in Education

- Framework,” accessed August 21, 2026, <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/racial-justice-education-framework>.
42. National Education Association, NEA Handbook 2025 (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 2025), resolution on “White Supremacy Culture.”
43. National Education Association, New Business Item 39, adopted at the 2021 Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly, June 30–July 3, 2021. The item was removed from the NEA website within days of adoption; for contemporaneous reporting including an archived link to the text, see Robby Soave, “Is Critical Race Theory Taught in K–12 Schools? The NEA Says Yes, and That It Should Be,” Reason, July 6, 2021.
44. OpenSecrets, “Teachers Unions: Industry Profile,” accessed August 21, 2026, <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus?ind=L1300>.
45. Pew Research Center, “What’s It Like to Be a Teacher in America Today?” April 4, 2024, based on a survey of 2,531 U.S. public K–12 teachers conducted October 17–November 14, 2023, via the RAND American Teacher Panel. Secondary source.
46. <https://www.dsausa.org/>
47. Democratic Socialists of America, “Religion and Socialism Working Group,” accessed August 21, 2026, <https://www.dsausa.org/working-groups/religion-and-socialism-working-group/>.
48. DSA Religion and Socialism Commission, “About Religious Socialism,” accessed August 21, 2026, <https://religioussocialism.org/about/>.
49. Michael Harrington, *The Politics at God’s Funeral: The Spiritual Crisis of Western Civilization* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983).
50. DSA, Workers Deserve More, “Feminism for All.”
51. DSA, Workers Deserve More, “Healthcare for All.”
52. Source: “What’s Left for Education?,” on the *Democratic Left* blog at [dsausa.org](https://www.dsausa.org).
53. DSA, Workers Deserve More, “Freedom to Flourish,” under “Thriving Working Class Communities.”
54. DSA, Workers Deserve More, “Our Perspective.”
55. Karl Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer, London, 5 March 1852, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, vol. 39, Letters 1852–55 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), 62; German: Werke, Bd. 28 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1963), 508.
56. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Karl-Marx>
57. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/assessor/buildings-and-property/>

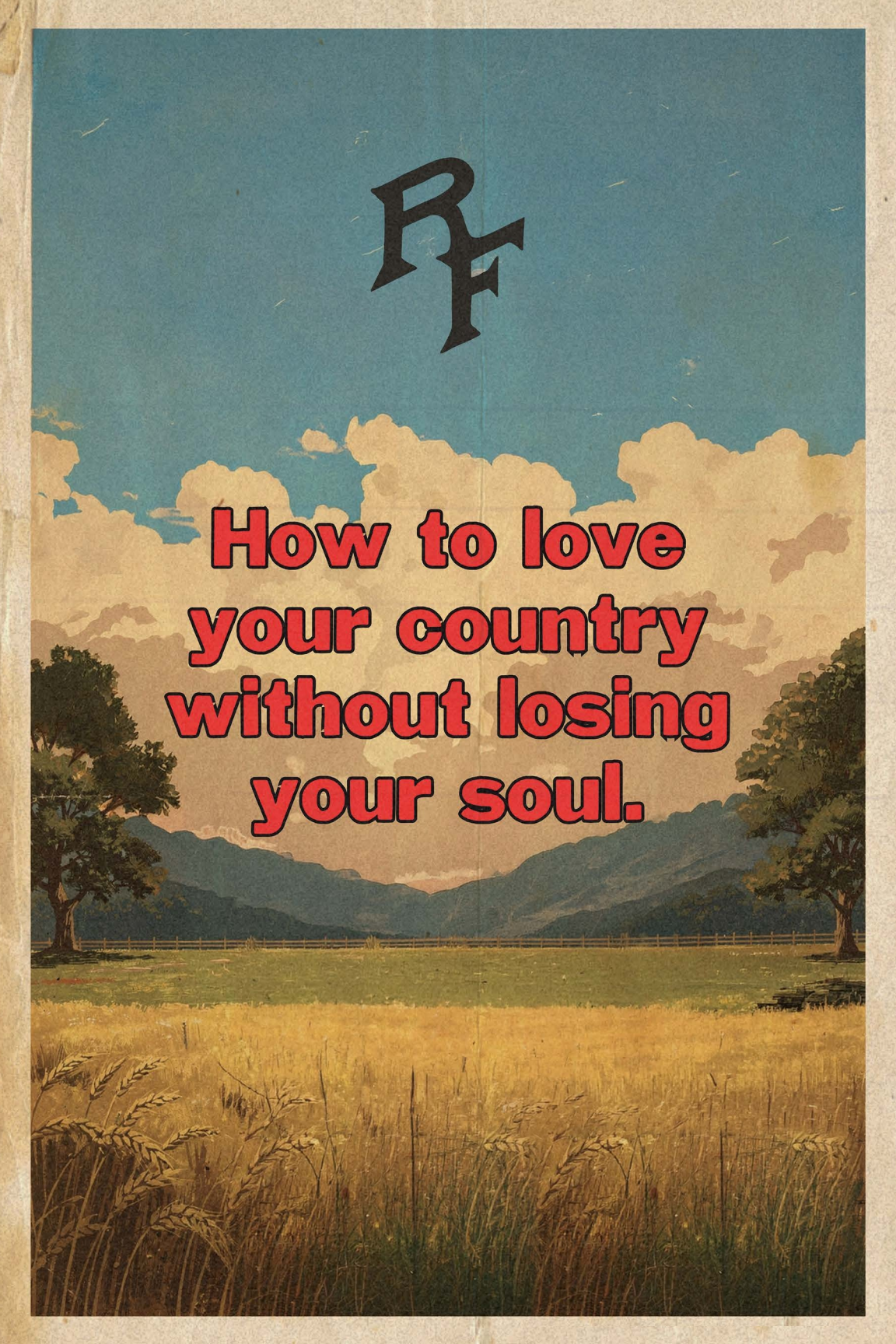
- property-taxes/property-tax-overview/2026-taxes
58. U.S. giving from individuals, bequests, foundations, and corporations reached roughly \$617.2 billion in 2025 and has held near 2 percent of GDP for over a decade, with religion the largest single recipient at about \$151.58 billion, or 23 percent of the total.⁵⁹ Measured on the only broadly comparable cross-national dataset, individual giving as a share of GDP runs 1.44 percent in the United States against 0.79 percent in New Zealand, 0.77 percent in Canada, 0.54 percent in the United Kingdom, and 0.50 percent in South Korea.⁶⁰ China — the only Marxist-Leninist state with usable figures — recorded donations of approximately 0.1 percent of GDP in 2019, against 2.1 percent in the U.S. that same year, and its giving is structurally inverted, with corporate donors supplying 61.89 percent of 2018 contributions versus 25.06 percent from individuals, the reverse of the global pattern in which roughly two-thirds of cash donations come from individuals.⁶¹
 59. Giving USA Foundation, *Giving USA 2026: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2025*, researched and written by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (Chicago: Giving USA Foundation, 2026).
 60. Charities Aid Foundation, *Gross Domestic Philanthropy* (West Malling, Kent: Charities Aid Foundation, 2016).
 61. Siwei Chen, Chengfang Liu, Jikun Huang, and Huayong Zhi, “Can Social Capital Facilitate Households’ Donations in Rural China?,” *China Economic Review* 81 (October 2023): 102034, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2023.102034>. The underlying donation figures derive from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Blue Book on Philanthropy: China Charity Development Report* (2020).

IT'S ALL
ABOUT
JESUS!

RF



RF



**How to love
your country
without losing
your soul.**