

Series: **Aliens 2.0**

Today's Title: "**Christian Nationalism**"

November 14, 2021 – *Selected passages*

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**Objective:** To help people know what the Bible says about political allegiance and activism in the church.

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***Opening prayer*** - Recognition of Veteran's

***I believe*** we live in the greatest nation the world has ever known.

Like every other nation in history, we are imperfect - but we have learned from our imperfections - and we're still learning - and have changed in dramatic ways for the betterment of all Americans.

***I believe*** the United States has used its power and influence not to conquer other territories or to suppress other people and nations, but to help other people and nations.

***I believe*** the United States along with its Allies have been a blessing to the world by fighting against evil nations and leaders who killed millions in their desire to overpower and conquer other nations.

***I believe*** the United States is the most compassionate nation the world has known as its citizens have given large sums of their own money to help people who are disadvantaged and suffering throughout the world.

I also believe our nation is in the middle of what some have called a Civil War.

One fought not with armies but with ideas - it's an ideological Civil War.

In this climate, everything escalates - and everything has become political.

Politics has infiltrated every area of life.

- COVID
- The Life issues...abortion, euthanasia
- Gender - transgender
- LGBTQ+
- Marriage
- Public Education system
- Divorce, child support, reproductive technologies
- Stewardship of the environment
- Pornography
- Care for the poor

Each of these issues has a moral component - and for centuries, the voice of the Church spoke to culture and gave moral direction to the culture.

But now, all of these have become political issues, and this has caused 2 reactions in the Church.

**1) Retreat** - Some in the Church think it should no longer speak to these issues because they are now political issues - and the Church should not get involved in politics.

**2) Attack** - Some Christians believe the Church should get more involved and be more aggressive in moralizing the culture - morality by legislation if necessary / if possible. They believe the Church should use its influence to persuade people to vote for specific issues and candidates.

I grew up in the Church.

The 1980's were formative years in my life.

In 1979, an organization by the name of 'The Moral Majority' was formed by a TV Evangelist - Jerry Falwell.

It was formed as a reaction to the cultural and moral transformation which occurred in the 1960's and 1970's.

It was disbanded in 1989, but in those 10 years, it was very successful and was embraced by many evangelical churches throughout the United States.

The Moral Majority partnered with churches - to mobilize Christians to become politically active and to champion conservative political issues which would often try to establish Biblical morality through legislation.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Moral-Majority>

This was the climate I grew up in.

In 1979 I was a freshman in H.S.

In 1989 I was married.

Formative years in my life.

The Moral Majority - and the climate in evangelical churches in the 80's and 90's - was a mix of the Christian faith and political views / positions.

The line between those 2 things was often blurred - and sometimes completely erased.

In the first 2 decades of my pastoral ministry, I continued to blend these 2 areas of my American life: my Christian faith and politics.

Not until the last 10-12 years have I stepped back and examined my practice and philosophy through a Biblical, Gospel and missiological mindset.

Over the past few years, I have observed a resurgence - a re-branding and re-launching of The Moral Majority philosophy - but with a new name.

### **Christian Nationalism**

**Christian Nationalism** is a label most critics have assigned to those they claim are guilty of this - but so far, it seems to be sticking.

And this re-branding or re-launching of the Moral Majority philosophy seems to be more divisive - likely due to the culture being more divisive and polarized than we've experienced since the Civil War.

### **What is Christian Nationalism?**

The answer depends on who you ask.

Like other terms in this series, the definition of ‘Christian Nationalism’ is unsettled and being debated. One’s political views - whether you’re conservative or liberal - tends to determine your definition of Christian Nationalism.

In his book, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War*, Matthew McCullough defines American Christian nationalism as “*an understanding of American identity and significance held by Christians wherein the nation is a central actor in the world-historical purposes of the Christian God.*”

Another author defines CN this way:

“The merging of Christian and American identities, liberally mixing biblical teaching with the principles of constitutional democracy until the line between them is blurred or even erased altogether.”

[\(https://www.relevantmagazine.com/magazine/under-god-the-rise-of-christian-nationalism/\)](https://www.relevantmagazine.com/magazine/under-god-the-rise-of-christian-nationalism/)

And 1 more definition:

“...the belief that Christians have been called by God to create a Christian nation.”

As you can see, there is no fixed definition of CN - but as the term is currently used, and avoiding some of extremes, we can say that CN is:

*'Christians who desire to blend traditional American identity, culture, and patriotism with the Christian faith - and they see the Church as a key organization to champion this effort.'*

Just like the Moral Majority was a reaction to the moral and cultural changes in the 1960's and 1970's, Christian Nationalism is also a reaction against drastic changes in the culture including, but not limited to the rise of globalism, government waste and corruption, and a long list of moral issues that have gained a strong foothold in political circles, but also in education.

CN is a view / belief that the Church should champion political causes and candidates that align with Biblical teaching about morality, marriage, etc.

Like everything else in our nation, the fervor and intensity of these efforts has increased over the past few years.

**Video:** Church blesses their members and their guns.

I realize that is an extreme example, and I show it not because I think churches across the nation are beginning to have gun blessing ceremonies, but I show it because it makes the point in a way that's hard to miss.

***When the Church sets aside it's primary calling, it will lead to that calling being marginalized and possibly ignored.***

While Christian Nationalism is typically a Republican / Right Wing movement, the political left - Democrats and the Left Wing has their own version of this where churches are used by candidates for political speeches and 'get-out-the-vote' efforts. This movement doesn't have a name - or the media obsession that CN holds, but it's just as harmful and dangerous to the Church.

This is not just an issue with the political right or left - it's an issue for all Christians - on both sides of the political aisle.

I believe the political activism of the Church in the United States over the past 40 years has damaged the Church's standing and reputation in our culture - and according to Barna research, this is especially true when it comes to the upcoming generations who, quite frankly, are sick of the political mess we have created, and they want nothing to do with it.

Instead of simply being apolitical - the younger generations also avoid the Church because they see no light between the Church and politics!

(See [UnChristian](#), by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, chapter 7)

Whether they are right or wrong, overreacting - the point is the brutal facts are what they are - and the political activism of the Church is offending our mission field not with the Gospel - but with non-Gospel partnership.

### **What does the Bible say about Christian Nationalism?**

If you look up ‘Christian Nationalism’ in an concordance - you won’t find any passages.

But the Bible does speak about issues that are directly related to CN.

I see 3 issues in the Bible that address this topic.

#### 1. The Christian’s *identity*.

I talked about this last week - so I won’t spend much time here, but it’s worth another look from this perspective.

Last week we looked our new identity in Christ from the perspective of race / ethnicity.

I talked about our sinful nature’s normal practice is to isolate / separate / segregate according to our external differences - of which skin color is only 1 of many differences that divide us.

Politics is certainly toward the top of that list.

Here’s the problem:



Our identity is often bound up in our political loyalties and convictions.

We often brand ourselves - publicly identify - post things on social media - that identifies our political beliefs and loyalties.

**Question:** Do people know you more for your politics - or your faith?

**Galatians 3:26-27**

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Other translations: “have put on Christ.”

When you put your faith in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, your identity changes - from the things that separate us - to being identified as one of God’s children - in His family.

We are now “clothed with Christ” - that is - should be - our primary identity!

**3:29**

“And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

All followers of Christ are in the same family - Abraham’s spiritual family who will receive God’s promises to Abraham!!

In **John 17** Jesus prays for our unity - that we would be one just as He and the Father are one - and He says

our unity would be evidence to the world of the reality of Christ.

**It's difficult to overstate the importance of Christian unity - as it reflects the unity of the Triune God - and the unity of the Father and the incarnate Son.**

**Our unity is evidence to the world of the reality of Christ.**

*"...for Christians especially - never feel more attached to your fatherland or your tribe or your family or your ethnicity than you do to the people of Christ. Everyone who is in Christ is more closely and permanently united to others in Christ, no matter the other associations, than we are to our nearest fellow citizen or party member or brother or sister or spouse."*

(John Piper - <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-much-patriotism-is-too-much-patriotism>)

## 2. Our patriotism and working / serving in politics.

I'll take this in reverse order.

There is a great deal of politicians and government workers in the Bible.

This makes it clear that being apolitical is not required - and I would argue, according to Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount that an apolitical posture is not the right posture because we are "salt and light" (Matt. 5:13-16). We are supposed to engage culture in ways that will influence the culture, and politics is certainly one of those ways.

Let me give you a quick survey of the politicians and government workers / servants in the Bible.

**Joseph** - VP of Egypt.

**Moses** - adopted into Egyptian royalty - led Israel for its first 40 years.

**Joshua** - led Israel after Moses' death.

**The various judges** - ruled Israel.

**Elijah** - spoke publicly and critically against King Ahab.

**Obadiah** - contemporary of Elijah (1 Kings 18) - served God from within wicked King Ahab's administration.

**Esther & Daniel** - both served heathen kings.

**Isaiah** - Raised in the king's palace, counseled various administrations.

**Nehemiah** - Served a foreign, heathen king.

**David** - served as King of Israel.

**Jonah** - spoke impending judgment on a foreign nation.

**Simon** - a disciple of Jesus - was a zealot - political activist resisting the Roman occupation of Israel

**Matthew** - another disciple of Jesus - a Jew who worked for the Romans as a tax collector - hated by his fellow Jews.

**Apostle Paul** - appealed his legal case to Caesar

I'm sure there are more I haven't mentioned, but you get the point.

The Bible - the people of the Bible are not apolitical. The Bible tells the story of God's redeeming work - and the people of God - muddling through the realities of life - and politics.

**No matter what time of history you examine - politics is always part of the story.**

God has not directed Christians to live in isolation from the culture - or to detach from the culture.

He has told us to do the opposite - to be in the culture - but don't allow the culture to define our identity or our practice.

**John 17:15** - Jesus praying for His followers

"I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one."

At the same time, the reality is that this world is not our home - this nation is not where our true, eternal citizenship exists.

**1 Peter 2:11**

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers..."

**Philippians 3:20**

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

This doesn't mean we live without attachment - with some sort of dissonance or lack of care or connection with this world and the people of this world.

“God so loved the world” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” serve as our model - our example to follow.

***Patriotism is a love of country...***a love of the land you live in - grew up in, etc.

It's not the same love that we should have for other people - the love for others that God displayed and commanded for His followers.

Patriotism is a love of one's country.

The Apostle Paul was patriotic.

**Romans 9:3**

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites...”

Paul had a longing...a closeness...a loyalty to his fellow Jews. He was bound to them - had a love for them - which was different from the love he had for all people.

**But Paul's identity was centered in Christ.**

**Galatians 2:20**

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...”

He was patriotic, but his priorities shifted from the marks and accomplishments in Judaism - to his new life and identity in Christ.

**Philippians 3:5-7**

“...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee...But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

### 3. The Church's *mission*.

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing the Bible has to say about Christian Nationalism is the Church's mission.*

The Church's mission is not to fix the moral compass of our nation.

Our mission is not to instill some sort of Judeo-Christian morality in the culture.

Our mission is the Gospel - to “make disciples” and be “witnesses” for Jesus - to be used by God to redeem the nations - to be a light to the nations.

The Church is not given the task of fixing this world. We are given the task of helping people get ready for the next world.

**John 18:36** - Jesus talking with Pilate

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world.”

The culture Jesus lived in was more corrupt, evil, and debased than ours is.

Roman rule was cruel and oppressive and Roman power murdered people all the time and mistreatment of people was their M.O.

But Jesus didn't speak out against Rome.

It's not because Rome was good - it was horrific and evil.

**But Jesus had a mission, and nothing would distract or deter Him from that mission.**

When His enemies tried to draw Him into a political discussion which could have been a huge distraction for Him, He refused to take the bait.

**Mark 12:17**

Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The Church's political involvement has negatively affected our ability to fulfill the mission.

I will do my best to make sure this church is not known as a politically conservative church - or politically liberal or apolitical.

**I want to make sure we are known for the Gospel.**

**We must be known as a place where people can find the truth, grace, and forgiveness of God.**

We must make sure nothing gets in the way - distracts or limits our ability to speak the Gospel to as many people as possible.

God - through His power - and His Word and His Spirit - can certainly change someone's political views.

He has specifically called you and me - His Church - to be witnesses to His Son - and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We must be clear - and committed to the mission He has given us.

***Apply it...***

Make your identity in Christ your priority.

I believe we are missing - or limiting our Christian calling to “make disciples” if we are letting something in this world become our primary identity.

- When you stand before Christ and He judges your service, will He want to hear of your political activism - or how you modeled and shared the Gospel with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers?
- Will He look at your voting history - or your faithfulness in life?
- Will He see love for party and country - or love for your neighbor?



## **Corporately...**

This point has manifest itself through my own ministry and the posture of this church over the past 10 years.

**The philosophy or practice I will briefly outline is how I have applied the things I've talked about today - to make sure we cast as wide a net as possible - and we don't limit the people who might come here and hear the Gospel.**

I do not avoid political issues. If I did, I wouldn't have many topics to talk about!

*Everything is political today!*

1. But I don't approach a topic politically, and I do my best to approach it Biblically.

2. I think every Christian should be Biblically informed on election issues - and informed on the candidates and the party they represent - and how they align / don't align with Scripture.

I tell you every election cycle: **Vote Biblically - Not as a partisan.**

3. I don't talk about specific candidates, propositions, or bills.

I do my best to talk from a Biblical perspective about the issues in play - and it's up to you to connect-the-dots.

You are responsible for how you vote before God - not me.

**4.** We don't sing patriotic hymns - because they are mostly nation-centric - not Christ-centric - or they have taken the non-Biblical position that the United States is a special work of God to accomplish His purposes in history - which is not supported Biblically.

**5.** We don't want to confuse politics - patriotism - national pride - with Christianity.

We showed the video earlier that recognizes Veterans, how they and their families who have served us.

We will also recognize other national holidays - Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, etc. - because they are not only significant in our shared experience as Americans, but each of those holidays and what they celebrate has a clear connection to a Christian value or truth.

Memorial Day - those who gave their life for others - Jesus gave His life for us.

July 4<sup>th</sup> - Our freedom and liberty - Jesus, through His death and resurrection - offers us freedom and liberty that surpasses our earthly experience.

I believe it's proper - and healthy to recognize these special days - because they remind us of the blessing we have in this country.

But we work to make sure we shine the brightest light on Christ - not the nation - and how Christ has provided even greater things - eternal things for those who have faith in Him.

**Philippians 2:15b**

“you shine as lights in the world...”

We don't want to be Republican or Democrat lights - Conservative or Progressive lights - we want to be lights that shine on Christ.

We want to love all people - not matter their politics - because that is what Christ commanded for us.

Let's do everything we can to be faithful and obedient to “make disciples” and be “witnesses” of Christ and the Gospel.

Close in prayer