

Matthew 23 “The Politics of the Messiah”

Stand Read 23:1-12 Pray.

There are those in mainstream evangelicalism that make statements about those of us that will talk about political issues as misled and deceived. Some will provide labels like Christian Nationalists. They will make themselves look like purist with quotes like “We just teach the gospel” or “We just focus on Jesus”. They have a habit of mixing evangelism with sanctification and making them one in the same. They have churches that can quote the whole book of Ephesians but have never read or studied the first five books of the bible and that they are the same words of God as Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount. These are churches that would teach Matthew 22 but then skip over to chapter 26. Have they ever really studied chapter 23? After all, you say you are a “Red Letter Christian” can you not see the whole chapter are the very words of Christ Himself? And have they ever bothered to study the system that was in place during the time of Christ? No, they have not, because if you they had, they would know that Jesus did dwell into politics. It may not be the same as what we are used to but there are some very close similarities. We will see those today and can discover that if Jesus was here today and walked into a school board meeting, He would not only be kicked out but most likely arrested. Before we start on what He says let’s look at who He is talking about...

Let’s familiarize ourselves with the government and political system in place at the time of Jesus. Rome was an Imperial system

of Government. That had broken the world into prefects or regions that were ruled by people that Rome sent to govern over. This was * during a time known as the “Pax Romana” which means “Roman Peace”. It was from 27 BC till around 180 AD.

This 200-year period saw unprecedented peace and economic prosperity throughout the Empire, which spanned from England in the north to Morocco in the south and Iraq in the east.

Rome had conquered the world with an Iron Fist and brought it under submission that led to this time of peace. It was the perfect time in human history for the Savior to come and the gospel to go out into all the world. For the most part they all submitted to Roman law but in the case of Israel they were allowed to rule themselves with two exceptions; they pay their taxes and no capital punishment. Other than that, they had full reign to live under their own rules and political system. This is the government that Jesus was under.

Israel was ruled by what is known as the Sanhedrin.

Sanhedrin

The supreme council and tribunal of the Jews during postexilic times headed by a High Priest and having religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction.

By the time of Jesus, the High Priest role became a political one that was corrupted by power. Caiaphas was the Real high Priest,

but Annas has assumed that role. This group was the one that tried Jesus and sent Him to Pilate to be crucified.

There were also political parties that acted to lobby, and some were part of this group. We met them already but to refresh our memory here they are...

Pharisees

A member of an ancient Jewish sect, distinguished by strict observance of the traditional and written law, and commonly held to have pretensions to superior sanctity.

The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen and leaders of the synagogues. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision-making of the Sanhedrin because they had popular support among the people.

Sadducees

A member of a Jewish sect or party of the time of Jesus Christ that denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of spirits, and the obligation of oral tradition, emphasizing acceptance of the written Law alone.

The Sadducees were an aristocratic class connected with everything going on in the temple in Jerusalem. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin.

Scribes (Lawyers)

A group of Jewish scholars who interpreted and taught biblical law and ethics from about the 5th century BC to about 200 BC.

Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to study the Law, transcribe it, and write commentaries on it. They were also hired on occasions when the need for a written document arose or when an interpretation of a legal point was needed.

So, we can glean from this some likeness to our own system of Government. A matter of fact they used it in the founding of our own system of checks and balances. But let us now go through this chapter thinking of our own politicians and are there any likeness to take from it. If Jesus were here today, would He be saying the same thing? Are we that hands, feet and voice for Jesus in this day and age? If so, then should we be speaking out as Jesus is here? Let's see...

A Warning to the Disciples

Matthew 23:1-12

Jesus is telling them that there was nothing wrong with the laws but that of the leadership. We have a constitution that is supposed to be by the people for the people. Notice Jesus is telling them to follow the law but not the leaders. Why? Because they were all about themselves. The office was there to serve others and not be served. Not really much different from our own system. This is quite the opposite of the "We are not going to get

involved” mentality. Jesus is saying get involved but remember why you are. We need more Christians to get involved. Trust me if Jesus were here today, we would be hearing about it! This is what happened with our politics. No one speaks up. We have lost the moral courage to speak up and hold them accountable. Jesus is not letting them off the hook, why should we? Our silence from the pulpits in America has led to our leaders to become just like these folks, All about the power and prestige. Have you seen the net worth of the establishment leaders in Washington? It is disgusting! Why do they get away with it? Silence! How does Jesus respond to these people? Let’s see!

Matthew 23:13-15

Hypocrisy, Wealth and Power

The Pharisees and Scribes were so hypocritical that they made themselves look like they were so righteous but they are the opposite. They pretended to care about the poor and the law and they really didn’t. Are you seeing anything familiar with our own politicians? Maybe just a little?

Matthew 23:16-22

False Promises

They were no different than the snakes we allow to fool us to vote for them today. They would twist the law, so it always rests in their favor. They will hold you to your word but will find every loophole to not have to perform theirs.

Matthew 23:23-24

Tax Loopholes!

They make themselves look good by showing they pay their taxes all the while raising yours! Jesus is saying yes, pay your taxes, but preform your duty. Do you realize that Jesus is recognizing taxation without representation? You thought it was just a modern thought, didn't you? This statement today would make Jesus a Patriot!

Matthew 23:25-28

False Persona

They would make themselves look so good on the outside but in reality, they were just the opposite of who they make themselves out to be. Politicians of our day are all the same. They use good language and condemn those that use bad language and name calling while in the back rooms and out of the sight of others they talk like sailors. You don't have to look too far into the lives of the establishment to find ties to Jeffery Epstein. No different then and no different now.

Matthew 23:29-36

Generational Hypocrisy

Jesus finishes by telling them their generational hypocrisy will bring them into judgment. Just because they may be getting away with it now does not mean they will get away with it. We must understand that God is the final judge, and it is by His standard we

will be judged. In all our defending freedom and standing for our rights we must remember that we have a moral standard that must be upheld. It is not ours, but God's. You will not be accepted but we must proclaim it. This is the battle. Right and wrong, good and evil. We must stand for what is right. We must warn those that are wrong of the path that they are headed on. They would not head Jesus and they may not head you and I. That does not mean we stay quiet. This would not apply to us if we were to stay quiet...

John 15:19-20

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

I don't see anybody using this as their life verse. I have not seen this on anyone's refrigerator. They hate our movement. They hate the fact that we are speaking up. We are attacked from the inside and out. But what is our attitude? Do we raise our fists? No, if we are really a follower of Christ, we will bend our knees!

Christ's heart needs to be our heart.

Matthew 23:37-39

God's heart for His people should be our heart for the lost. Our politics should always be that of care and compassion understanding that they are lost in their sins. When we are we

can approach these things with grace and love. They can hate us, but we don't hate them. We don't have to shout and yell out, but we will speak. People need to know there is a standard and that they have broken it. It is then that they can hear and receive the gospel message.

John 1:10-13

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Speak the truth by living the gospel in all areas of our lives. From the bedroom to the ballot box. Don't be afraid to demand a standard to live by and tell people what happens when we break it. It is only then can we share with them the hope of Jesus.

Gospel, Stand, Pray