

b.) The role of government is to provide peace, justice, and order in society (i.e. to enforce commandments 4 – 8 that govern our external interactions with our neighbor). To this end God has given the authorities the right to curb/deter/punish immoral behavior with bodily punishments.

Jeremiah 21:12; 22:3; 13-17 ¹² O house of David, this is what the LORD says: ‘Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.’” ¹³ This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. ... ¹⁴ “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. ¹⁵ He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms.’ So he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. ¹⁶ “Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. ¹⁷ He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the LORD. ¹⁸ “But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.”

c.) In contrast, the role of the Church is to use the Word (law and gospel) to work repentance and faith in hearts.

d.) What does Solomon tell us to expect from earthly governments? Why?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there.

Ecclesiastes 5:8-9 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

e.) Whatever form a nation’s government may take, what do we Christians owe the authorities? How are we to live?

1 Timothy 2:1-2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

f.) What two reasons do the apostles give for why Christians should submit to the government?

Group Discussion

1.) Respond to the following: “The United States is God’s favored nation because...

a.) ...The original colonies were founded by Christians fleeing persecution.”

b.) ...Our nation was founded on Christian principles and a Christian world-view." (For example: *The Declaration of Independence* includes four references to God: "...Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," "...all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," the concluding paragraph appeals to the "Supreme Judge of the world," and the final sentence expresses a "firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.")

c.) ...The Establishment Clause of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment generally provide for religious freedom."

d.) ...The *Pledge of Allegiance* includes "under God" and our money is stamped with "in God we trust."

e.) ...The majority (~60%) of Americans identify as Christians."

2.) *The Declaration of Independence* famously states: "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." How does our Scripturally transformed worldview give us Christians a understanding of...

- The equality of persons

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

2 Corinthians 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

- The right of life

Deuteronomy 32:39 "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand."

Acts 17:27 "God [determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live] so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

- The use of liberty

2 Corinthians 5:15 He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

1 Peter 2:16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- The pursuit of happiness

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Psalms 119:35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

1 Timothy 6:6-8 Godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

The Church and Government

1.) We’ve seen that God has very different goals for the church and state and different means given to each to accomplish those goals. With those distinctions in mind, should the government be involved in the following, and if so, to what degree?

- a.) Teaching religion/the 10 Commandments to children
- b.) Encouraging prayer in schools
- c.) Charity/Social Welfare
- d.) Education
- e.) Marriage
- f.) Abortion

2.) Does God say that any one of these matters automatically trump all other considerations? Where does that leave us when it comes to political parties?

3.) What strong warning does Jesus give us about the relationship between the church and state in the New Testament era? That is the danger?

Revelation 13:1-17 And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. ⁴ Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?”

⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. ⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷ He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. ⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

¹¹ Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. ¹² He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. ¹³ And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. ¹⁴ Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. ¹⁶ He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Questions?