God and Christians in Politics
Pastor Larry Ecton, September 6, 2020
There is an unfortunate misunderstanding that we have these days regarding some words. Because democratic republics have elections and voting, we use the word "politics" to describe the process and the environment of what is, actually, another form of "power" system.
Power. Specifically, the power that is exercised by some people over others through government. It can be a Prime Minister, a Parliament, a King, Queen, or Prince, a Governor or Emperor or Mayor or Caesar or President, County or township leaders, sheriffs, aldermen, etc.
The government may be a democracy, autocracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, republic, a constitutional or absolute monarchy, or other forms of government.
Pharaoh was the name for the absolute monarch of ancient Egypt. Saul, David and Solomon were kings of the united kingdom of Israel, as absolute monarchs. Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, Nero, and others were absolute Emperors of Rome, after an attempt at being a republic failed.
Often (though we seem to have difficulty really grasping this), civil government is completely entwined with ecclesiastical (religious) government. Such is the case in Iran and other Muslim countries today. We hear news reports about "clerics" but we fail to also understand that to mean "senator" or "general." We hear titles like "Ayatollah" but don't quite get that it means "dictator."
All of these, and of course much more, have to do with power; what the New Testament calls "governing authorities," with the power to make and enforce laws or edicts that, for good or evil, govern the land.
Ok Larry, so why do you bring all this up right now?
Well, I've become aware of a very unfortunate attitude among many otherwise-knowledgeable Christians, that for some reason we aren't supposed to get "mixed up" in this very important part of human life. You see, when we use the word "politics" instead of "power," our minds suddenly go to the messy, nasty, stuff of the American system of governmental power, and we don't want to dive into that mess.
I will grant you, an absolute monarchy or socialist dictatorship would be much less messy. Those are very crisp and clean and black-and-white, because they do not allow real freedom for the people. There is no self-government of “we the people.” The only "messy" part is what they do to any people who rebel or disobey the leaders.
And since, as we've discussed a lot in recent months, whatever system of "governing authority" we live under, as Christians we are to submit to its authority unless/until we are required to disobey God or His Word - so we actually must be "mixed up" in the system of governmental power, whether we like it or not!
And, God is and has always been very involved with governing authorities! With “politics,” so to speak.
· Abraham submitted to Melchezedek, king of Salem and priest of most-high God.
· God raised up Joseph to be prime minister under pharaoh, actually ruling Egypt
· Moses was sent to a later pharaoh to be used to demonstrate God's superior power over him, bringing about the release of 2-1/2 million Hebrew slaves.
· Moses himself, followed by Joshua, was the human agent of God's theocracy over the Hebrews for a combined 80+ years, receiving, teaching and enforcing God's Law. And note, God’s law wasn’t just “religious,” but the very heart of civil government.
· When the people rejected God's theocracy and demanded a monarchy, God gave them Saul, David, Solomon, and the many kings of the divided kingdom.
· And God was constantly engaged with these kings, sending His prophets to encourage, rebuke, direct, threaten, oppose, and come alongside as situations required.
· Also, many of the kings (the good ones) regularly went to God in prayer for forgiveness, comfort, miraculous assistance, and guidance. They were engaged with Him as a necessary part of their role as governing authorities!
And speaking about the kings, Gods said this in the Law:
Deuteronomy 17:18-20 "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. (19) And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, (20) that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.
So let’s forget any nonsense about God wanting His people to stay aloof from politics – No, in fact, He clearly intends for us to be in the thick of it! Imagine! Kings copying, reading, and living according to the Bible!
OK, you may say, how about the New Testament? How about Jesus? How was He engaged with government powers. Aside from His time with Pontius Pilate the day He was crucified, there's nothing about Him interacting with the Roman rulers.
Right, but remember what I just said about some systems where civil and religious government are mixed? Well, that was the case with the Chief Priests and the Sanhedrin in Jesus' day. While Rome exercised overall authority, they allowed local authorities to govern the people in everyday matters, and in the Roman province of Palestine, the Chief Priests and Sanhedrin were the political government rulers, as well as religious. Though subject to Roman control, the Sanhedrin was the highest judicial body in Israel and exercised judicial, legislative, and executive powers at that time. In fact, the chief priests themselves were selected and appointed by Rome, so they were very aware of their political dependence on their Roman masters.
And Jesus certainly did interact with them, as did John the Baptist. Remember how John addressed them when they came out to his baptisms in the Jordan?
Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
Now that is the kind of thing we'd expect to hear in a heated political environment! In fact, that could be said now about the snakes who are slithering around to destroy our country.
Jesus actually used the same accusation when addressing these same political leaders:
Matthew 23:33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?
Then we see in Matthew 22 Jesus told parables that were clearly rebukes to the corrupt chief priests and Pharisees, and in chapter 23 our Lord cut loose with scathing attacks on them with a series of "woes," calling out their hypocrisy and corrupt, unfaithful leadership whereby they abused the people they were supposed to govern and care for. Here’s just a few examples:
Matthew 23:4 …they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. [sound familiar?]
Matthew 23:14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.
Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.
We are so used to reading all these things from a "religious" mindset, that we've failed to see the very strong political element. Jesus was confronting the governing authorities of His day with their corruption and lawlessness! These are the kinds of things we’d see in political “attack ads” on TV.
In fact, just listen to what these "governing authorities" say about themselves, when they had become worried about the impact Jesus' signs and miracles were having on the people:
John 11:47-48 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. (48) If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."
"Our place and nation" The Sanhedrin was worried that, if Jesus' were left at large, to run free with His teachings and miracles, it would create such a stir that Rome would come down and take away the privileged position of the Jewish leaders. In effect, Rome would "drain the swamp" of the corrupt Jewish political leadership for their failure to maintain control.
So you see, in both the Old and New Testaments, our God is very engaged with governing authorities, and we His people are to follow His lead:
1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.
Now, as I said earlier, lots of people don’t want to follow Jesus here because politics is messy, it’s nasty, and we might feel the need for a shower after getting out there. But if we don’t get involved (even if just going to the polls to physically vote), the only people involved in determining who rules, and how, will be nonbelievers, and people who support baby-murder, sexual perversion, the poisoning of our children’s minds, and the destruction of the biblical family.
If we fail to stand up for those powerful biblical imperatives, we will have abrogated our God-given responsibility to be salt and light on this earth!
It is truly shameful that we American Christians have been granted an incredibly rare privilege in the annals of human history, yet we fail to receive it, to grasp it and use it! Who, over the millennia, could have even imagined that there would one day be a people - a whole population of citizens - who would actually have the power to both select their leaders, and to have a say in what policies and laws they would live under? The mere idea of self-government would have been such an outrageous idea that anyone who suggested it would have been thought deranged.
And yet, here we are, by the grace of God. And, because there are always those who wants to destroy these things, we are, today, on the verge of losing this very privilege, this God-given power.
As we know, in recent decades evil has been able to abuse this privilege to pass laws promoting the murder of unborn children, celebrating sexual perversion, and imposing these evil teachings, along with racism, into our public education system. These same evils want to destroy the State of Israel, whereas we know that God said to Abraham:
Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
And you, Christian, have been granted the incredible power and opportunity to actually have a say in whether these evils continue, or are stopped.
In ancient Sparta, many a girl child or a boy child who didn't look especially virile, was left out in fields to die of exposure. Nobody had the power to stop the governing authorities from doing this. This is still done in parts of the world today.
In ancient Rome, the governing authorities actually promoted homosexuality so that soldiers would be fighting for their male lovers, as well as for Rome. Nobody had the power to stop it, including Roman citizens (who were just a minority of the population).
In the Palestinian territories today, textbooks openly present Jews and Christians as evil, baby-eating monsters, and young people are raised believing that this racism is objective fact. Nobody stops it.
But here, in these United States of America, today, this year, now, YOU have the power, granted by God! You have the freedom and the right to promote and defend what is right in discussions, in civic meetings, private conversations, and with your live, personal vote. Your involvement in our political process is, therefore, an act of faithful stewardship of what we – rare in human history – have been given by God. And God doesn’t give us anything that He doesn’t want us to use – and use for His glory.
God is always in control, so we needn’t fear the outcome, but voting is stewardship of what God has placed in our care, and we should never take that lightly.
Yes, it is messy! But don’t cop the lazy and cowardly excuse that you’re supposed to be “aloof” from such earthly, real, very important ways to shine the light of your Lord Christ in this very dark world! Don’t you do that!
And please, don’t use the hyper-religious, “I’ll just pray,” because we know that, while prayer must be the first thing we do, it must not be the last, nor the only thing we do. We must also act out our faith, live our faith, speak the truth, fight for righteousness, and vote our biblical values, standing for biblical truth – no matter what the mobs or the media or the “cancel culture” may say!
Christian, we are commanded to be obedient and bold, prayerful and involved, and our Lord will hold us accountable. Now is not the time to be silent, nor to hide in the dark, hoping evil will go away. It won’t. So get in the fight! Our Lord did!

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.