CITYLIGHT INSTITUTE

The Bible and Politics

Handout | Spring 2024

Introduction

Notes:

Session 1: The Bible and Government

Main question: What does the Bible say about government?

Principle 1 (Scripture):

Principle 2 (Lordship):

> *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.* (Psalm 145:13)[1]
>
> *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.* (Revelation 11:15)
>
> *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36)

[1] All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV.

Principle 3 (authority):

See Genesis 1:26.

Principle 4 (spheres of authority):

The three spheres of designated authority are:

What is an important implication of this principle?

Principle 5 (civil government):

> [1]*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.* [2]*Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.* [3]*For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,* [4]*for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for 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.* [5]*Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.* [6]*For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.* [7]*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.* (Romans 13:1–7)

Principle 6 (the Fall):

> "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." (James Madison, Federalist Papers, 51).
>
> "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and the next place, oblige it to control itself." (Madison, op. cit.)

Principle 7 (forms of government):

Does the Bible prescribe a single, ideal form of government?

> "This question [of the ideal form of government] admits of no simple solution … If you compare the forms of government among themselves apart from the circumstances, it is not easy to distinguish which of them excels in usefulness…" Calvin, Institutes, 4.20.8.

Are all forms of government equally good/bad?

There are four fundamental biblical principles by which to evaluate any civil government, which follow in the principles below (4 P's).

Principle 8: Governments should <u>punish</u> evil and reward good

> See Romans 13:3–4 (above); also 1 Peter 2:13–14: [13]*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,* [14]*or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*
>
> "Through the state there takes place a partial, anticipatory, provisional manifestation of God's wrath against sin." - C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans Commentary 2.666

Principle 9: Governments should protect human life; not shed innocent blood

> *Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.* (Genesis 9:6)
>
> *Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.* (Joel 3:19)
>
> See also Deuteronomy 21:8–9; Jeremiah 22:3

Principle 10: Governments should promote justice for their citizens, especially the poor

> [1]*Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!* [2]*May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!* … [4]*May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!* … [11]*May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!* [12]*For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.* [13]*He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.* [14]*From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.* (Psalm 72:1–14)
>
> *Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.* (Daniel 4:27)
>
> See also Psalm 82:2–4; Jeremiah 22:3

Principle 11: Governments should provide a platform for the activity of the church, especially worship and evangelism

> [1]*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,* [2]*for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* [3]*This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,* [4]*who desires all people to be saved and to come to the*

knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4; see also 1 Thess 4:11–12; 1 Peter 2:11–16; Acts 5:27–29)

Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. (Isa. 49:23, Rom. 13:1–6) And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. (Ps. 104:15, Acts 18:14–15) It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance. (Westminster Confession of Faith 23.3)

Principle 12:

See Daniel 4:22–37; 2 Samuel 23:3–4.

What is <u>not</u> one of the God-ordained duties of civil government?

Wrapup: What can we learn from all this?

1.

2.

3.

Session 2: The Bible and Voting

Main question: How does the Bible inform how we might vote and think about politics in America?

Heart:

Our primary and ultimate allegiance as believers is not to a country, flag, party, or ideology, but to King Jesus.

> *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Philippians 3:20)
>
> *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* (Hebrews 11:13)
>
> *On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.* (Revelation 19:16)

What are some implications of this truth?

Head:

1.

What are some ways can we apply the principles learned in Session 1?

2.

3. Notes on the two major parties:

4. Notes on the two-party system:

	Social Sphere	
Fiscal sphere ⏬	**Liberal**	**Conservative**
Liberal	Democratic party	??
Conservative	??	Republican party

5. Some notes about party platforms:

6. Notes on miscellaneous matters:

Hands:

1. Notes on party registration / affiliation:

2. Should Christians vote?

3. What are some ways to think about who to vote for for president?

4. Have you considered all the options?