

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

(by George Battey)

In the beginning God ruled over man. There was no thought about man ruling himself.

Sin entered. Man rebelled – he refused to be governed by God.

Genesis 3:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The woman was deceived into thinking this, but the man was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). He sinned in rebellion against God – knowing that what he did was wrong.

- *Man did not want to submit to divine authority any longer.*
- *He decided to rule himself.*

Though atonement was provided (Gen 3:15, 21), the attitude remained in men.

Two bloodlines began to develop:

- **Seth** – *his descendants were called the “sons of God”*
- **Cain** – *“sons/daughters of men”*

Genesis 6:2 (NKJV)

2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

Cain's descendants tended to be proud, self-reliant.

- **Cain** – *had a son (Enoch) for whom he built a city. He also had a descendant (Lamech) the first polygamist who threatened to destroy anyone getting in his way (Gen 4:23-24).*
- **Seth** – *his descendants were called the “sons of God.” He had a son (Enoch) who was translated. He also had a descendant (Lamech) who bore Noah!*

The intermarriage between Cain's descendants and Seth's descendants resulted in Cain's descendants corrupting Seth's.

NOTE: This is usually what happens in mixed marriages – i.e. this is the normal rule.

Genesis 6 (NKJV)

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

The flood was God's solution to this problem.

BABEL

After the flood men were to replenish and fill the entire earth. Instead, men decided to ban together and make a name for themselves:

Genesis 11:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

3 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.
4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, **lest we be scattered abroad** over the face of the whole earth."

This tower was called the "Tower of Babel." "Babel" was first mentioned in chapter 10:

Genesis 10:8-12 (NKJV)

8 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth.
9 He was a mighty hunter **before** literally: "against; in the face of" the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD."
10 And the beginning of **his kingdom was Babel**, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.
11 From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah,
12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

According to Keil & Delitzsch, the name Nimrod itself means "we will revolt."

"Hence, if the expression 'a mighty hunter' relates primarily to hunting in the literal sense, we must add to the literal meaning the figurative signification of a 'hunter of men' ('a trapper of men by stratagem and force,' Herder); Nimrod the hunter became a tyrant, a powerful hunter of men. This course of life gave occasion to the proverb, 'like Nimrod, a mighty hunter against the Lord,' which immortalized not his skill in hunting beasts, but the success of his hunting of men in the establishment of an imperial kingdom by tyranny and power." (I:166).

Josephus writes that Nimrod held a grudge against God for destroying his forefathers in the flood:

"He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, - seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!" (Antiquities, 1,4,2).

This is the first mention of a "kingdom" started by men. This was man's first civil government that we have record of – man's first organized effort to govern himself.

In starting human governments, men surrendered the control of their affairs to Satan.

Luke 4:5-7 (NKJV)

5 *Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*

6 *And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for **this has been delivered** to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*

7 *"Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."*

“delivered” (παράδεδονται) – perfect tense – past action with abiding results. (See also Jn 12:31; 16:11). In other words, civil governments (“kingdoms” – v5) were delivered into the hand of Satan and they remain delivered to him.

NOTE: Some argue that Satan was lying to Jesus. After all, he is the “father of lies” (Jn 8:44). However, Jesus was being “tempted” in this passage (Lk 4:2). Jesus could not be tempted with something He already possessed. If the “kingdoms of the world” were already His and under His authority, Satan could not be truly “tempting” Him by offering the kingdoms to Him.

The fact remains: The kingdoms of the world (civil governments) have been delivered to Satan and remain delivered to him. Civil governments represent men attempting to rule themselves.

ISRAEL CHOSEN

While all the nations began to choose their own gods, the God of heaven began to choose a nation!

- ***Israel was God’s kingdom** – the “kingdom of God” on earth in the form of the Nation of Israel.*
- *Conflicts occurred between God’s kingdom and men’s kingdoms.*

God wanted no alliances between His kingdom and men’s kingdoms.

- *The kingdoms of men were tied to idols (false gods).*

- *Thus, the more steeped in idolatry a nation was, the “more wrong” it became for any alliance to exist between Israel and that nation.*

Exodus 34:12-16 (NKJV)

12 "Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst.

13 "But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images

14 '(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

15 "lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice,

16 "and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

Israel rebelled and wanted to be “*like all the nations*” about them. They wanted to have a king like all the nations.

1 Samuel 8:4-8 (NKJV)

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah,

5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

*7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.***

8 "According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day; with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods; so they are doing to you also.

“they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” – this demonstrates “all the nations” whom Israel wanted to be like were not submitting to God’s reign. Civil government was formed in an effort by men to rule themselves and now Israel wants to be like this.

God eventually chose David. Eventually the kingdom split.

- *Israel* – followed the golden calves made by Jeroboam.
- *Judah* – followed after gods of her own.

Now Israel was “like all the nations” only worse!

Jeremiah 2 (NKJV)

4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel.

5 Thus says the LORD: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters?"

11 Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit.

Assyria was sent to destroy Israel for this. Judah watched, but did not learn any lesson. She became worse (cf. Jer 3:6-11).

God was distressed because He wanted a nation in the world distinct from all the nations of men to uphold His name.

Now, even the nation which He chose and nurtured has turned its back on Him. Has become worse than the nations.

God used other nations to destroy / punish Judah and Israel.

- *Assyria* – sent to destroy Israel (Isa 10:5-7)
- *Babylon* – sent to destroy Judah (Jer 25:9)

BOOK OF DANIEL

Now the nations (Babylon) think it is because of their gods that they were able to conquer Judah & Israel.

This is where the Book of Daniel enters the discussion. Daniel was written to teach that Assyria and Babylon conquered Israel and Judah, not because their gods were greater, but because of the sins of Israel and Judah!

RESTORATION

After 70 years in captivity, God restored Judah to her homeland.

They almost lapsed into their old ways of intermingling with the nations of the world – again!

Nehemiah 13:23-27 (NKJV)

23 In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.

26 "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin.

27 "Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?"

Ezra 9:1-4 (NKJV)

1 When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

2 "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass."

3 So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.

4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

Thus, Nehemiah and Ezra required that Judah separate from the pagan wives which they had married.

NT

By the time of John the message being preached was, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 3:2).

- Not that God did not have a kingdom before this – for He certainly did (cf. Ps 22:28; Dan 4:17).
- God’s kingdom would “*come*” in a new form – not in the form of the Nation of Judah, but *in the form of the church*.

This new form of God’s kingdom would not be like the old form:

Old	New
Men born physically into this kingdom.	“Born again”
A part physical, part spiritual kingdom.	Totally spiritual kingdom (Jn 18:36).
A national kingdom.	An international kingdom.

Mt 5 points out the difference between the OT kingdom and NT kingdom.

- **Mt 5:38-42** – deals with ***police*** action within the nation
- **Mt 5:43-48** – deals with ***military*** action without the nation

Since NT kingdom is not physical kingdom at all:

- 1) **Citizens of this kingdom will not administer police action** – because all the citizens are spiritually minded and do not need physical police action used on them.

Occasionally one is expelled because he refuses to be guided by spiritual principles (Mt 18:17).

- 2) **Citizens of this kingdom will not administer military action** – because a spiritual kingdom is not threatened by physical nations.

Citizens of the kingdom of heaven (church) fight a spiritual war:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NKJV)

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

HEAVENLY CITIZENS

Christians are citizens of a heavenly kingdom:

Philippians 3:20 (NKJV)

*20 For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

They are to view themselves as “strangers” and “pilgrims” in this earth:

1 Chronicles 29:15 (NKJV)

*15 For **we are aliens and pilgrims** before You, As were all our fathers; ...*

Hebrews 11:13 (NKJV)

*13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth**.*

1 Peter 2:11 (NKJV)

11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Christians, admittedly, need to be careful with this concept – for Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship to keep from being beaten and killed (Acts 22:25; 25:11). But his true allegiance was to the “kingdom of God” – the church.

It is difficult to detect any connection between Paul wanting to avoid a beating and then concluding:

- *A Christian may fight in the military because Paul appealed to Caesar to keep from being killed!*
- *A Christian may hold political office because Paul appealed to Caesar.*

SEPARATION

It appears the separation God intended between the governments of men and His own government is still to be maintained.

God does not intend His people begin to rule themselves.

- **Human governments** = *men ruling themselves*
- **Divine government** = *God ruling men*

Christians cannot become part of the effort of men attempting to rule their own lives. I.e. Christians cannot become part of civil governments.

CHRISTIAN'S OBLIGATIONS

The Christian's obligations to civil government are: *pray*, *pay*, and *obey*.

1) Pray

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)

*1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, **prayers**, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,*

*2 **for kings and all who are in authority**, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*

Note the real purpose of the prayer is for Christians' benefit.

2) Pay

Romans 13:6-7 (NKJV)

*6 For because of this **you also pay taxes**, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.*

*7 **Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due**, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

Tax money has always been used by governments to promote wickedness. Rome subsidized idolatry from public funds, yet Paul told Christians to pay their taxes to Rome.

Though the U.S. government finances abortions or promotes war, the Christian is not implicated in such evils just because he pays taxes.

ILL: If a Christian owes the town drunk, he must pay what he owes – even if he knows the drunk will take the money and buy booze.

3) Obey

Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV)

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

1 Peter 2:13-14 (NKJV)

*13 Therefore **submit yourselves to every ordinance of man** for the Lord's sake, whether **to the king** as supreme,*

*14 or **to governors**, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*

Christians should be the best possible citizens, but their obligations are limited.

Christians need to be careful about “speaking evil” of the leaders of our nation. Some listen to Rush Limbaugh so much that they begin to show disrespect (cf. 2 Pet 2:9-10; Jude 8-11).

4) Stay out of civil government

If the conclusions of this study are correct, the scriptures are warning Christians to remain out of the efforts of men to rule and govern themselves.

Remember: Divine government and human governments are the only two options.

Matthew 21:25 (NKJV)

25 "The baptism of John; where was it from? **From heaven or from men?**" ...

We must ask the same question regarding governments. There are only two sources. The only divine government is the "*kingdom of heaven*" (church – Mt 16:18-19; Col 1:13) and this excludes any other government.

Everyone on earth is in one or the other, but cannot be in both.

NOTE: A distinction is being made here between being "*in*" government and being "*under*" government authority. Daniel was "*under*" the authority of the government of Babylon, but he was not "*in*" the government in the sense of aligning himself with that pagan government and becoming part of it. A "*proclamation*" was issued that Daniel should be the "*third ruler*" of the kingdom (Dan 5:29), but the text does not say Daniel accepted this "*honor*" for himself. Furthermore, the kingdom ended that very night. His "*reign*" lasted only hours before the government of Babylon was overthrown. The fact that Daniel was appointed by Belshazzar as a ruler on the last night of the kingdom's existence demonstrates Daniel was not a ruler in the kingdom previous to this – else, why the appointment?

Concerning others like Joseph and Esther, it must be remembered that Joseph was a prophet delivering a message from God to preserve the posterity of Jacob (Gen 50:20). No Savior could have come into the world without the work of Joseph. Likewise, Esther "came into the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14) – i.e. to deliver the Jews from extinction so the Savior could eventually come into the world.

Therefore, Christians should not become:

- *Police officers or military officers (executive branch)*
- *Judges of civil law (judicial branch)*
- *Lawmakers of civil law (legislative branch)*

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (NKJV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

VOTING

Q: As citizens of the heavenly kingdom, should Christians be voting in elections?

When someone votes, the elected official becomes the voter's "representative." The delegate represents the voter and, in turn, votes on issues for voter himself. The voter, therefore, becomes responsible for what the elected officer does in office. After all, the voter put the officer into office – empowered him.

When President Bill Clinton was elected, a bumper sticker became popular:

Bumper Sticker: ***"Don't blame me; I voted for Bush."***

Everyone who voted for Clinton became responsible for all that he did in office.

No politician can fully and accurately represent what a Christian stands for:

- No abortion – even in cases of incest and rape (Rom 13:9).
- No alcohol except for medicinal purposes (1 Tim 5:23).
- No tobacco (1 Cor 6:12).
- No homosexuality (1 Cor 6:9-10).
- No easy "no fault" divorce laws (Mt 19:9).
- No women appointed as judges to exercise authority over men (1 Tim 2:12).

If a candidate advocated such things, he could never be elected.

VOTING ON ISSUES

Q: May Christians vote on issues?

- *May Christians vote on a referendum that would outlaw abortion?*
- *A referendum that would outlaw homosexuality?*

No principle seems to be violated in voting in issues like these – issues which God has already spoken on:

- *Alcohol*
- *Abortion*
- *No-fault divorce laws*
- *Lottery*
- *Night clubs*

If Christians voted on such issues, they would not be trying to “*govern themselves*,” in such cases. They would merely be speaking up and telling what they believe and what God said.

When Christians vote on issues, they are not choosing someone to represent them and thus implicate themselves when the representative votes the wrong way – which is sure to eventually happen!

CONCLUSION

Remember these points:

- Human governments originally began in rebellion to God.
- God has proficiently used wicked, violent men to perform violent jobs.
- The Christian’s obligations are to obey civil governments when possible, but not to become involved in government themselves.

A good verse which summarizes this study:

2 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV)

*4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life,
that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was the first manmade government that we read about in the Bible?
- 2) Who was the founder of this government?
- 3) Why did God not want an alliance between Israel and other governments?
- 4) What did Judah begin to do after they were restored from the Babylonian captivity?
- 5) Did God have a kingdom during the OT days?
- 6) When the NT says the “kingdom” would “come” – what did this mean?
- 7) Is it right for Christians to vote in elections?
- 8) Is it right for Christians to vote on referendums?