GOD and GOVERNMENT (Part 1)
"What is the Primary Role of Government?"

INTRO: When you hear the word "government," do you have a positive or negative reaction? Begin new series today on God and Government and end around election day. "Why do we need a Bible study on government?" Short answer: Scripture plainly reveals that all government is God's idea and exists for very important reasons. Plus, we need to clearly understand our God-given responsibilities to the God-ordained governing authorities. We must learn to think and act biblically about government and citizenship. The Bible teaches that God is the Ultimate Ruler over all creation and that He establishes human governments to restrain evil, maintain order, ensure justice, uphold freedom, and foster peace in a fallen society.

***THE* QUESTION:** "What must we know and do to advance the kingdom of God for the glory of God to stem the tide of evil in our land until Jesus comes?"

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER *THE* QUESTION:

- Who establishes governments and what are its roles?
- What are the primary responsibilities of the people to the governing authorities?
- When is it permissible to disobey the government? Civil disobedience
- Should we vote who or what? How can we vote biblically?
- How did the Bible inform the concepts that framed our U.S. Constitution?

TWO VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT – BOTH UNBIBLICAL

There are *two unbiblical* views of government today. Both less than God's desire. *One* is that government is unnecessary. This is the perspective of *anarchists* (society without rulers). The *other* view is that government is the "savior." "If the government doesn't do it, who will?" Neither of these extremes are true. Government is necessary but it is not a savior – it's one of God's "servants" (Rom. 13:1-7 [3 times]). Only One Savior! (1 Tim. 2:1-5). To see God's perspective, we need to examine some foundational passages on the major role of all governing authorities. Let's begin at the beginning.

GENESIS – Creation: God created (Chs. 1-2: ca. 4000 BC) … Fall: Shortly after creation man chose to disobey and sin entered and spread (Gen. 3-5). By Noah's time (ca. 2500 BC) sin, violence, and evil grew and spiraled out of control (Gen. 6:5-13, 17). God's response? Sent worldwide flood to cleanse the world of otherwise unstoppable evil and violence (Gen. 6-8). God promised not to destroy it by flood again (8:20-21), but He also could not leave sin and evil unchecked. Instead of another flood, He gave us government. For what reasons?

THREE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT (Gen. 9:1-7)

1. *God establishes government* (vv. 5-6). God ordained three institutions: Marriage and Family (Gen. 1-2), Government (Gen. 9:1-7; Rom. 13:1-7; etc.), and His People, the church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:19-20). Government was second only to family in importance to God. Most Christians know more about what the Bible says about family and church than government. Each serves His purposes. Government is God's idea. Noah did not come up with it. His descendants did not come up with it, nor did our Founding Fathers. Government is God's idea, and ultimately, He's the One who establishes them. Now to us and to most historians, it might look like a powerful warlord made himself king. It might look like "we the People of the United States" came together "in order to form a more perfect union." But the biblical witness is clear. God establishes governments, whether patriarchal, priestly, prophets, Kings, Queens, from Pharaoh in Egypt (Exodus 9:16) to Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Habakkuk 1:6). To say government is established by God is not to say Government is being run by Him and reflecting His will. God allows kingdoms and democracies to exist. But why?
2. *God establishes government to protect human life* (vv. 5-6). God allowed humans to eat animals (I guess we have this moment to thank for the chance to eat bacon and steak!), but God demanded an accounting-justice!-for any animal or human that killed a human. Why?

Notice, first of all, that every human life is valuable because God created them in His "image and likeness." This is the biblical foundation for human dignity and rights. Every human being-born and unborn, black and white, rich and poor, young and old, male and female-is made in the image and likeness of God and has the right to live according to God's own command.

Secondly, notice only humans, because they are made in the image of God, may take a human life to protect or avenge human life. This is the

biblical foundation for human government. The first civil law was to protect human life and punish wrongdoing.

3. *God establishes government to protect human life in order to promote life in His image and likeness*. (vv. 1, 7 enjoyment, growth, peace – Jam. 1:17).

God commands Noah twice to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). When we show His image and likeness, we create a society where people can worship God, live in peace, work hard, enjoy God's creation, and share what God gives. Now of course, this "godly utopia" is impossible to achieve, until Christ Himself rules in the Millennial Kingdom. Sinners are bound to take advantage of others. That's why God created government as His "servant" to protect life in order to create a society that best represents His image and likeness (morality). Some key implications from Genesis …

Look at Psalm 72:1-4 …

JESUS LEGITIMIZED GOVERNMENT (Mk. 12:13-17; Jn. 19:11). Both Jesus and Paul lived in a world ruled by evil dictators, dominated by slavery (25% population – 6 mm), high taxes, and persecution. Christ's (and Paul's) solution was not to overthrow the government. They were most concerned about turning the heart of people toward God, not in their political freedom and rights under government. They focused on getting the gospel of salvation to a lost world. They left us with the same mandate (Matt. 28:16 ff.). When it comes to government we have two main responsibilities: Submit to the laws and support with taxes! We are to be good citizens honoring, respecting, and obeying the authorities.

PAUL AGREES (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 3:1-2) – Romans 56 A.D., 1 Tim. & Tit. 62-67 A.D.

God holds supreme power over all nations. He places leaders in power and removes them according to His own plans (Daniel 2:20-21). From Gen. 9 and Rom. 13 we see God-ordained government (regardless of form) to protect citizens by punishing wrongdoers and praise people who do good. Even the godless, unjust, and evil Roman Empire was actually established by God and charged to protect life, liberty, and property, and promote good and because they failed miserably, like others before them, they were also judged by God. God will judge ALL rulers – whether dictators, monarchs, governors, citizen-rulers who rebel against God's mandate. Peter, too (1 Pet. 2:13-17). This is the teaching of Psalm 2 …

PSALM 2 God will punish governments that fail to obey Him! (2:9; Rev. 19:15-16). Even in a world of broken governments, God will accomplish His great purposes. In a sermon the Apostle Paul preached, he pointed out that one of God's purposes in establishing the nations of the world has always ultimately been about helping them get to know God (Acts 17:24-27).

God establishes governments to protect life in order to promote a society where people seek to express His image and likeness!

Religious freedom is one of the most wonderful and ultimate blessings a government can offer its citizens. God's people should enjoy and take advantage of it while we can be and make disciples. Shine the light and shake the salt (Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:16) We may not always have religious freedom as we know it. Future generations will almost certainly lose it at some point and experience marginalization, persecution, even martyrdom like so many Christians throughout history and in the world today. But that cannot stop us from our mission. Our primary allegiance is not to a flag but to a cross.

The church, as opposed to government, is not primarily called to protect human life but to represent Him and His character. The church is called by God to "make disciples of Jesus from all nations" (Matt. 28:16 ff.), which will protect and respect human life.

Jesus, with all the authority in the world, tells His followers not to protect life or promote flourishing but to make disciples. This is the heart of what it means to be the church. It is not that we don't care about life or flourishing. Remember, we are citizen-rulers too, but as church members, we are about disciple-making.

SUMMARY: God established government as His "servant". It should:

- Restrain evil
- Reward good
- Maintain order
- Uphold freedom
- Ensure justice

Pro. 29:2 is so true "When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule the people groan."

CONC: God establishes all governments and will hold them accountable, like He has done to His own people Israel. Because all human leaders are flawed, no perfect government until Jesus Himself reigns during one thousand years Millennium!

NEXT? "What are citizens responsibilities according to God?"