GOD and GOVERNMENT (Part 5)
(Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:1-2)
Today: "How Did the Bible Inform our Constitution?"

INTRO: Elections matter! The decisions elected officials make impact our lives. God ordained three institutions in order: Marriage and Family (Gen. 1-2), People of God (Church) – Gen. 12:1; Eph. 2:20; Cor. 12, and Government (Gen. 9:1-7; Rom. 13:1-7). Functioning governments trace all the way back to ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia (modern Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait) and Egypt around 4000-3000 BC.

TWO VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT: First it is unnecessary (anarchist). Second, it is "savior." The answer to all our needs, "Let the government do it." Actually, it is "God's servant" and accountable to God. What is role of government? Citizens?

HOW DID OUR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC COME ABOUT AND HOW MUCH DID THE BIBLE INFORM CONCEPTS IN ITS FORMATION? DATES: WAR (1765-83), DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776)

Americas first national framework for government was founded in 1781 under Articles of Confederation (AOC), following the Declaration of Independence (1776). Over time, with much debate, some of the Framers of AOC felt it gave too much power to the individual states. The central government could not collect taxes, pay debts, or keep order. States constantly fought over trade and money. In time the Framer's developed a federal system that balanced power between central federal government and the individual states.

They wanted to avoid the tyranny of a single ruler, but they also saw (divine providence?) that a loose group of states with no central control could not survive. The Framers felt a separation of powers would ensure citizens more safety and happiness. So, on September 17, 1787, the US Constitution (USC) was completed and ratified on March 4, 1789, a new federal government began operation, balancing powers between federal branches and between federal and state governments. The federal side is designed to manage issues like national defense, regulate interstate and foreign commerce, conduct foreign policy, a federal judiciary, and stabilize the national economy, while leaving local laws to individual states.

Most of the Founding Fathers opposed a pure or direct democracy. They feared giving the general public unfiltered, direct control over policy making would bring instability, emotional decision-making, and the oppression of minority rights. Instead, they framed a "constitutional democratic republic" with representative government and strict checks and balances. They created a system featuring the separation of powers across three branches and a federal structure sharing power with the states.

"So, is America a democracy or a republic?"

They are not mutually exclusive opposites: rather they describe overlapping aspects of a government where power rests with the people. Some definitions are helpful.

SOME CORE DEFINITIONS: "Politics" is derived from the Greek word "polis," which means "city." Politics is the business of the city. Where kings have "subjects" who are subjected to their will, democracies and republics have "citizens." "Citizen" is a Greek word which means "co-ruler." Democracies and republics are "popular governments" where the "population" of citizens co-rule themselves. Democracies and republics are both different in that a "*democracy*" is a *"popular government" where "citizens" rule themselves "directly" by being personally present at every city meeting*. A "*republic*" is a *"popular government" where citizens rule "indirectly" through elected "representatives,"* which is more practical and efficient. This way citizens can take care of their farms and businesses and send representatives to attend government meetings in their place. A republic can more efficiently function over a larger geographical area than a democracy. As a form of government, a democracy only successfully works on a small, city-wide basis, where every citizen was physically present at every meeting. During the era of the Cold War, the word "democracy" came to have a second, more generalized meaning of simply "popular government." The US is both a democracy and a republic. It is a *constitutional representative democracy (or a democratic republic)* because the public chooses leaders through free and democratic elections, but those leaders are expected to govern within the legal limits of the Constitution. Elected leaders are accountable to the people who elected them, and ultimately accountable to the God who placed them there.

"How did the Bible inform our constitutional representative democracy?"

The Bible heavily influenced the moral, cultural, and political worldview of the founding generation. The Bible does not prescribe any particular form of government (democracy or otherwise). The Bible shaped American government in many ways. Most of the 39 signers of the Constitution were Protestants, but they wanted the document to encompass all faiths. Though the Constitution never mentions the Bible or God, it does express great sensitivity to biblical convictions and concepts. "The founding fathers read the Bible … this was the one book that Americans would be most familiar with."

A few years ago, a couple of University of Houston professors conducted a 10-year review of 15000 writings (speeches) of our Founding Fathers from 1760-1805. Out of the 15000 they isolated 3154 direct quotes or attributions from Scriptures that had specific impact on the concepts framing our US Constitution. Plus, of those 3154 writings, the Bible was quoted 16 more times than any other source, roughly 34% of the analyzed quotations. 94% of the quotes were based on the Bible. 34% came directly from the Bible. The other

60% used the Bible to form their opinions. Most Founding Fathers wrote openly and often about the influence of the Bible and Christianity and Jesus on their lives! John Q. Adams (Federer p. 19), J. Madison (F pp. 409, 411), B. Franklin (F p. 239 ff). In addition, Scripture is engraved in many of Washington's buildings and monuments.

EXAMPLES – No way to be certain that specific Bible verses were voiced, but most were serious Bible students with a strong biblical worldview.

- *Three Branches of Government (Isa. 33:22)*

  John Locke, a European Enlightenment thinker who wrote *"Two Treatises of government,"* government: Judicial, Legislative, Executive. Articles 1 (Legislative), 2 (Executive), and 3 (Judicial) of the Constitution designate these three branches, creating a separation of power. Why three equal but separate powers? Because we have a problem (Jer. 17:9). The human heart is deceitful and beyond cure apart from Christ. Checks and balances are necessary to keep us honest and within the laws of the land.

- *Tax Exemption for Churches (Ezra 7:24)* Government has no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levite singers, Temple Gatekeepers, servants, etc. – All related to Temple (church, synagogue, etc.) functions.

- The Declaration of Independence reflects *biblical ideas that human rights come from a Creator* rather than a king.

- *President Must Be Natural-born citizen (Deut. 17:15)* – Note God chooses.

  Early Founding Fathers argued that a democratic republic government requires a moral public, and that the Bible offers the best guide for personal morality. John Adams "Our constitution was made only *for a moral and religious people*. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." We are to be a self-governing people, which is impossible apart from God. So, if (when) a nation of people declines spiritually, soon moral standards, laws, code, statutes, fall away. Eventually, when the moral authority of God revealed in His Word of Truth, we become a nation in decline. No doubt we are witnessing this in our times (last 75 years esp.).

PARALLEL CONCEPTS BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTION AND THE BIBLE

As previously stated, the Bible was the most quoted source, by far, in all the Founders' speeches and writings. No other source gave our Founders the concepts they sought for the establishment of a government for a free people better than the Bible. Let's examine our Constitution and how the Bible influenced many of its concepts. Highlight Preamble, Articles, Amendments …

The Bible views government as an institution (along with marriage, family, and church) created by God to keep order and promote justice, esp. in a fallen world. The most detailed teaching on this topic is found in Rom. 13:1-7 (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) Paul explains how citizens (esp. Christians) are to relate to those who rule and lead them. Paul teaches these basic truths about citizens and how they are to relate to government.

***TRUTHS* from Rom. 13:1-7**

1. All human governments are God-ordained, regardless of form, and receive their power from God. They are "God's servants," ultimately accountable to God.

2. The goal of government is to protect welfare of society and reward good moral behavior and punish bad moral behavior.

3. Every citizen should submit (respect, honor) and support (taxes), and obey the elected leaders who rule. But there are limits to that submission. Civil disobedience is an option if commanded to disobey God!

CONC: The truths in the NT (Paul, Peter) match exactly what Jesus said and practiced during His life (Matt. 22:21). Our pledge to the flag includes "one nation under God" (1954). Our motto "In God We Trust" appeared on U.S. coins (1864) and bills (1957) less than one hundred years after our Constitution. A 1955 law mandated it on all currency. Motto's can't change hearts (let alone a country), but it is a beautiful truth for those who do believe it – and know that ultimately our trust is in King Jesus – not in our government, not in our rights (Psa. 2:1-12; 9:1-7; 72; 146:3-5; Gen. 9:1-7; Rev. 19:11-16). Clearly, God establishes government to protect life in order to provide us opportunity to live our lives reflecting God's image and likeness.

In this series I wanted to help us think biblically about our government and our citizenship. John Adams, "Suppose a nation in some distant Region should take the Bible for their only law Book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry, to justice, kindness, and charity toward his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Almighty God… What a Utopia, what a Paradise would this region be." How were Founding Fathers able to undergird our US Constitution (Declaration of Independence) with such a high regard for Scripture? The Bible was their guide. They lived a Biblical worldview. So must we.