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KINGDOM Alignment – Faith and Politics

A Biblical and Historical Study

Core Thesis

- Faith and politics cannot be separated, because Scripture consistently treats public power as a profoundly moral issue. The Bible does not teach that government conceptually is inherently evil, but it does teach that government is limited, accountable, and always under God's ultimate rule.
- In the Hebrew worldview, political systems are judged by whether they preserve justice, protect the vulnerable, and honor covenant order.
- The New Testament continues this perspective, affirming civil authorities as possible God's servants while establishing a crucial distinction between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God.

The Origin of Politics

Politics begins wherever people organize power, authority, and decision-making in community. In its simplest sense, politics is the management of shared life:

Who has authority? (Authority)

How rules are made? (Law)

How disputes are resolved? (Justice)

How resources are distributed? (Economics)

How power is limited or concentrated? (Power)

In the ancient world, politics was usually tied to kingship, empire, tribe, temple, or military control. Political systems emerged because human beings live in communities and must decide how power will be exercised.

The Bible enters this discussion by refusing to treat power as neutral. Scripture presents governance as morally accountable before God. Politics begins in God's design for ordered community, not chaos.

The Hebrew Understanding of Political Systems

The Theocratic Foundation

Ancient Israel operated under a theocratic principle, meaning that government was, in every sense, government by God. All authority was exercised in God's name by His chosen agents—priests, prophets, and eventually kings. This theocratic foundation meant that political power was never absolute or autonomous; it was always delegated and accountable.

The Covenant as Political Constitution

Israel's relationship with God was formalized through covenant—a binding agreement that structured every aspect of national life, from worship to welfare. The covenant established that justice was not merely a social virtue but a divine requirement. "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 16:20) The command to "pursue justice" is comprehensive. It demands active, relentless commitment to righteousness in all legal and political matters. Under this system, judges and officers were appointed throughout the land to ensure justice was administered fairly, without partiality or bribery.

Protection of the Vulnerable

A central test of any political system in the Hebrew Bible is how it treats the most vulnerable members of society. "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed." (Psalm 82:3) Throughout the ancient world, justice was understood as the protection of the poor and vulnerable from those who would exploit them. This was not optional charity but a non-negotiable requirement for any government claiming to operate under God's authority.

The prophets served as God's "checks and balances," confronting kings and officials who abused their power. The Old Testament is filled with stories of kings abusing their power and prophets calling them to account. The prophet Nathan confronted King David over his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 12). Elijah confronted Ahab over the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21). These prophetic confrontations demonstrate that no political leader—not even the king—is above God's law.

The Limitations of Human Government

The Torah is systematically skeptical about politics. In an ideal world, God Himself would be the direct ruler of His people, but because of human sin, political institutions became necessary.

Purpose of Government

To Promote Justice

- Micah 6:8 — Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly
- Isaiah 1:17 — Defend the oppressed

To Restrain Evil

- Romans 13:1–4 — "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad..."

To Protect the Vulnerable

- Psalm 82:3–4 — "Defend the weak and the fatherless..."

Government is judged by how it treats the powerless.

I Samuel 8:1-9

1 Now it came about, when Samuel was old, that he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. 3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest gain, and they took bribes and perverted justice. 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the matter was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have abandoned Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you as well. 9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall warn them strongly and tell them of the practice of the king who will reign over them."

Humans Choice in Leadership

Through the prophet Samuel, God explained that asking for an earthly king meant trading divine freedom for an oppressive government. God warned that the king would:

Conscript Children: Force sons to serve in the army, build weapons, and run before his chariots. Daughters would be taken as perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

Confiscate Property: Seize the best fields, vineyards, and olive groves to give to his own officials.

Heavy Taxation: Take a tenth of their grain, vintage, and flocks to support his government and servants.

Take Slaves: Use the best servants and donkeys for his own labor, essentially reducing the people to servitude.

God's Choice in Leadership

Conversely, when God set the rules for how a righteous earthly king should govern (Deuteronomy 17), His commentary emphasized humility rather than power. God commanded that this king must:

Not acquire many horses: Avoid trusting in a massive military, relying instead on God.

Not have many wives: Prevent his heart from being led astray.

Not accumulate excessive wealth: Prevent greed and avoid looking down on his fellow citizens.

Study God's Law: Read from a copy of the law daily to learn reverence, humility, and obedience to God.

Discussion Question

The prophets held political leaders accountable for justice. Do you see a prophetic role for the church in your community today? What would it look like to "speak truth to power" with both courage and grace?

The New Testament: Dual Citizenship

The New Testament builds on the Hebrew foundation while introducing a crucial development: believers now hold citizenship in two realms. While the Old Testament largely addressed how God's people should govern when they held political power, the New Testament addresses how believers should live under governments they do not control.

Romans 13 is the New Testament's most comprehensive teaching on government. Paul establishes several key points:

Government is instituted by God. "There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1).

Government is God's servant for good. "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad... for he is God's servant for your good" (Romans 13:3-4).

Government has the legitimate power to punish evil. Paul notes that the ruler "does not bear the sword in vain" (Romans 13:4).

Christians should honor their civic obligations. "Pay to all what is owed... honor to whom honor is owed" (Romans 13:7).

The Limits of Civil Obedience

The New Testament also establishes clear limits on obedience to government. When human authorities command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, the believer must obey God rather than human authorities.

"We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

The apostles themselves exemplified this principle when they continued preaching the gospel despite the Sanhedrin's explicit prohibition.

Jesus and the Politics of His Day

Jesus Rejects Political Messianism

- John 6:15 — People try to make Him king by force
- Luke 4:5–8 — Satan offers political kingdoms

Jesus Redefines Authority

- Mark 10:42–45 — "Whoever wants to be great must be servant..."

Kingdom Above Politics

- John 18:36 — "My kingdom is not of this world."

Jesus confronts power but refuses to conform to political expectations.

Jesus and the Politics of His Day (Expanded)

Jesus did not teach that faith and politics should be kept entirely separate. Since God is ruler over everything, faith must inform political beliefs and actions.

Jesus refused to make political revolution or earthly power the center of His mission. When tempted with "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matthew 4:8-9), He rejected satanic political power. When the crowd tried to make Him king by force (John 6:15), He withdrew. When asked about paying taxes to Caesar, He gave the instruction: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).

This teaching does not divide loyalties but recognizes that believers have obligations both to government and to God, with God holding ultimate claim.

Revelation: The Limits of Earthly Power

The book of Revelation, particularly chapter 13, presents a stark critique of political power when it becomes idolatrous and persecuting. John describes a beastly empire that demands worship and wages war against the saints. Facing the worst of government hostility, John suggested passive resistance, not political or military revolution. The New Testament as a whole limits the state by recognizing that God alone is worthy of ultimate allegiance.

Discussion Question

How do you balance Romans 13's call to submit to authorities with Acts 5:29's call to obey God rather than men? Can you think of contemporary situations where Christians might need to practice civil disobedience?

Two Forms of Government

Totalitarianism is a form of government where a single, authoritarian party controls all public and private life. In this system, individual freedoms are denied, opposition is strictly prohibited, and the state uses continual propaganda and state-run media to enforce absolute obedience.

- **Single-Party Rule:** Only one political party is legally permitted to exist.
- **State-Controlled Economy:** The government regulates all economic activities.
- **Mass Propaganda & Censorship:** Media and education are heavily controlled.
- **Terror and Coercion:** Suppression through fear and force.

Authoritarianism focuses on maintaining political control while often leaving personal life less regulated. Totalitarianism seeks to control every facet of life.

Modern Days: Faith Co-opted and Authentic Faith Proclaimed

Politicians routinely invoke faith to baptize policies. The confusion is profound: conflicting voices all claim Jesus, yet advocate for opposite agendas. We witness a perversion of authentic faith whenever:

- Christianity is reduced to a political identity marker.
- The gospel is swapped for prosperity and power.
- The vulnerable are demonized rather than protected.
- Faith is weaponized to justify domination.

The Way Back to Authentic Faith

The authentic Christian purpose in the political sphere is:

- Prophetic, not partisan
- Incarnational, not imperial
- Eschatological hope, not temporal triumph
- Micah 6:8 — Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly
- Matthew 5:13–16 — Salt and light
- Philippians 2:5–11 — Christ's humility

Reflection

In a world where “faith” is often a flag to wave, how can you and your faith community recover the way of the servant King, refusing to use God for political gain and instead bearing witness—sometimes at great cost—to a kingdom not of this world?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Your generosity is positively changing lives in our church, community, and around the world. Apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 that whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Thank you for continuing to help others see the generous nature of the body of Christ through your giving.

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