

Government (Part 3)

The New Covenant's Effect

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In the sermon that was given by me on the last weekly Sabbath, we saw that Israel consented to obey the covenant through which God became their Ruler. However, He was moved to divorce her, because of her repeated violations of their agreement. We saw then that her governance was given over to Gentile rulers. And it was not until, approximately, the last two hundred years that Israel once again gained enough power to govern themselves.

In "The Lord's Prayer" (so-called that by the world) Jesus said:

Matthew 6:9-10 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the meantime—during that period of time in which the governance of Israel was taken away from them and given into the hands of the Gentiles—Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We can see very clearly by this model prayer—that was given to Jesus' disciples—that God's Kingdom is not yet here on earth. They were to pray for it to come.

You will recall that Jesus clearly enunciated to Pilate that, though He was a King, His Kingdom was not of this world; and He was not a threat (or competitor) to this world's political powers. Included in Christ's ministry on earth was the laying of the groundwork for the establishment of a new covenant that would correspond, in purpose, with the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Everything about this Kingdom is spiritual in its focus. It is not here *yet*, but it is to it that we owe our allegiance, our loyalty, and our devotion. By its very nature, it demands—and deserves—the submission of our will, our heart, and our life. So we are instructed, then, to make it something that we are praying for, constantly. (I do not mean just all the time; but it is something that never leaves our mind.) It is never very far from us. And, if we are praying this every day—"Your Kingdom come,"—it will help to keep the focus of our life on that spiritual Kingdom.

Turn with me to John 17. Here we have the real Lord's prayer—the prayer of Jesus Christ that He made on that final evening before His crucifixion.

John 17:14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Here is an example of that dichotomy that I mentioned to you in the sermon on the last weekly Sabbath. There is produced in our lives a dichotomy (something that is "a split"—almost as if there are two things existing at the same thing). In this, we are like Jesus. He was in the world,

but He was not of the world. His message was preached in the world; but it was a message about a Kingdom, though, that is not of the world.

We begin to see, in verse 14, what produces this dichotomy. "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them"—a separation begins to occur—"because they are not of the world."

John 17:15-17 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them [That means, "dedicate, or consecrate." It means, "set them apart."] by Your truth [that is, God's Word]. Your word is truth.

So, here we find ourselves in the world, but not of it. This was produced because we have heard the gospel and responded to it. This has produced a separation from conformity to the world; and, if continued in a person's life, it will also produce a separation from the evil of this world.

We have to learn to live with this. Sometimes this is a very difficult thing to put up with in our life. I want you to turn to Hebrews 8. Remember that I mentioned to you, just a little bit earlier, that Jesus laid the groundwork for the establishment of a new covenant that would correspond—in purpose—with the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That is, a covenant that would correspond in purpose to this spiritual Kingdom of which Jesus preached. Notice how the chapter begins.

Hebrews 8:1-2 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

The gospel, when combined with the New Covenant, alters a person's relationship with God—and thus, also with government. It is obvious (from verses 1 and 2) that this covenant has a *spiritual*—that is, a heavenly—basis. The word that is used here and is translated "heaven" is just another way of saying that this covenant and the priesthood of Jesus Christ have a spiritual basis.

The chief point (or, "the main point" as it says in my New King James in the first verse of this chapter) is that Christ, our High Priest, is shown functioning in the office of High Priest *from heaven*. You will notice that contrast is being produced, in this chapter, through the illustrations that are given. And what he is showing is that something that has come into our lives is better—it is superior—to anything that has preceded it. The covenant is superior. The priesthood is superior. The High Priest is imminently, endlessly; infinitely superior to anything that has ever existed on earth. The best that had existed in that category, up until that time, had been the priesthood—or, the High Priesthood—of the religion that God gave to Moses.

Hebrews 8:10-12 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in

their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

We have a *spiritual covenant*. We have a *spiritual sanctuary*, there in heaven. We have a *spiritual High Priest*. But the fact that there are laws mentioned here, unrighteousness mentioned (lawless deeds and sin) shows that there is government involved in the New Covenant.

Because we have entered into this New Covenant, we need to know what our relationship is to government now. Verse 11 clearly shows that fellowship with God and those under the New Covenant is now direct. "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me." He is pointing out that there is no need of a privileged class of intermediaries.

This does not mean, though, that there is no need of teachers. This is clearly shown in the book of Ephesians, where God made a gift (or, many gifts) of teachers to the church. What the apostle means here in Hebrews is, rather, that knowledge will not be confined to a special elite (as it was in Judaism's scribal class). Remember the scribes and the Pharisees? It is also interesting to note that the comparison, in this chapter, is with Moses and the tabernacle.

Hebrews 8:3-5 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One [meaning Christ] also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest [He could not have been anything more than a layman, under Judaism.], since there are priests [Levites] who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle.

That is something that most of us would simply pass by, reading it and going on. But whoever the author was he was making it very clear that the comparison here in Hebrews 8 is not between the temple and Judaism but, rather, between Moses and the tabernacle. This is because Judaism was not the religion God gave Moses. Rather, it was a perversion (an aberration) in the same way that modern Christianity is an aberration of first-century Christianity.

The real pattern that we are to follow, if we are going to look at patterns, or models, or symbols, is back with the tabernacle, and also with Moses—and the religion that was given, by God, through Moses.

Hebrews 8:5-6 Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make

the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." But now He [Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry.

Now we have something that is even better than the pattern that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. We have the reality! I want to draw your attention to verse 2.

Hebrews 8:2 ...a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.

The word "true" is not wrong. However, in modern English, we would say that now we are dealing with the *real* thing. There are, in biblical usage, two worlds. There is *the real world*—i.e., spiritual, eternal. There is that world that is going to last forever and has been forever. And then there is *the temporal world*—the corporate world, the world of which we now are a part. That world, though it may appear 'real', to our eyes, is something that is passing. It is not something that is to last.

So our spiritual High Priest, operating out of spiritual headquarters—He is the Administer of the sanctuary of *the real* (spiritual, eternal) *tabernacle*. We, then, have made a spiritual covenant with God.

Hebrews 8:7-9 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

Hebrews 8:13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

We saw, especially through the writing of the apostle Paul, that this Kingdom is spiritual in nature and that we are already considered, by God, to be part of it to such an extent that our citizenship is there. We sit in heavenly places in, or through, Christ Jesus.

Putting Paul's scriptures together with ones from Peter and also John, it becomes clear that those who hear the gospel and respond to it enter into a covenant—a spiritual covenant—with God. And they are in process of being built into a spiritual house.

Now, the writers do not always use the same analogy—or the same symbolism. Thus, depending upon the context, that "house" may be called a dynasty. That "house" may be called a family. That "house" may be called a body. But always underlining, even though it is not directly stated, we have to understand that he is talking about a *spiritual organism* that is more

real—"eternal", "age-lasting"—than what we are able to see with our eyes.

This *spiritual reality* (called a house, family, dynasty, or body) is also a royal priesthood. It is also a holy nation that is going to bear rule over the earth under Jesus Christ. All of this begins to be accomplished by the receiving of God's Holy Spirit—by which we are installed in His church (body, house, family, dynasty—all spiritual.)

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul is making an illustration here that is very similar to others that he made—in which he takes an experience of Jesus Christ and shows how we go through much the same thing. Another example of this is Romans 6, in regards to baptism. How we are baptized into Christ's death and how we are raised up to a new way of life. Christ also died. Christ also was buried. Christ also was raised up. Somewhat different, but still it is a similar pattern that we are going through.

That is exactly what Paul is doing here in Ephesians 2. He is making a comparison with something that Christ has already done in reality. We are going through the same kind of thing in a tiny *spiritual* way. First of all, there is the communication of a new way of life. That is, we hear the gospel. Then, because of that, there is a change from a state of death caused by sin. We were dead in trespasses. Then, there is "a making alive," and then, exaltation into heavenly places.

It is obvious that this has not yet completely, literally, occurred to us; but Christians are sharing Christ's experience in their experience. I want you to notice that those words are written in the past tense. Verse 6 is very clear—"raised us up" and "made us sit together." It has already occurred. It is a *spiritual transformation* already effective. Now, it is very important that you get this! It is already made effective.

Its purpose is also stated here; and that is "that in ages to come [That is yet future.] He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." So, a spiritual transformation, already made effective. We are *in process* of being prepared to glorify God in ages to come.

Let me give you an amplified, but a more literal, translation of that phrase "that in ages to come." That is: in ages that will pile up (or, pile themselves one upon another) in continuous succession. It is another way of saying "from age to age." It is another way of saying, "forever and ever." It is another way of saying, "from everlasting to everlasting."

Now who are we going to glorify God before—in ages to come? (It gives the impression of *many* ages to come.) We are being prepared by God to do that. So, undoubtedly, the first 'age to come' is going to be the Millennium. The second 'age to come' will be the Great White Throne Judgment. And I think that it continues on out, because we will be glorifying God before the

angelic hosts forever and ever and ever.

Remember that they—the angelic hosts—have been in on this from the beginning. Maybe there were some of the angels who did not think it could be done. (I mean, this transformation—because that is what we are leading to here.) This transformation that is taking place in our lives is a very vital part of our attitude toward government. In fact, when we come to understand it, this approach to things *dominates* our attitude toward government.

II Corinthians 5:16-17 Therefore, from now on [Paul writes.], we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

You will find, from that point on, the context leads the way into a discussion of reconciliation. God has reconciled us to Himself, through Jesus Christ; and He has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:19, 20 That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself....Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore [beseech] you on Christ's behalf, to be reconciled to God.

Going back to the context of what we just read in Ephesians 2, the result of this "being raised up"—as though we are actually, literally, sitting in heavenly places—is being made part of a process. Again, I am calling it here a transformation.

In verses 16 and 17, Paul is saying that as a result of this, we no longer look at things the way we did before. "From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh." Before, we always regarded everybody according to the flesh. Now, we regard no one according to the flesh. You see: conversion means a change of perspective has taken place. One set of conditions is passing out of the way.

Recall I Corinthians 8:13? We just read that—how that the Old Covenant has become obsolete and is passing. Not passed, but it is something that is disappearing progressively. It is something in process. It is passing away; and a New Covenant is coming. It, too, is "in process." The Old is being replaced.

That is the way conversion is. The "old" passes away. The "new" comes into its place. A process is taking place. A transformation is gradually taking place in our lives. And, as Paul describes it here, we no longer look at things according to the flesh. Now we look at things according to the spirit. That is, a converted person does. So, a transformation is taking place—from a worldly point of view to a spiritual one. And the first step—in the context of II Corinthians 5—is to be reconciled to God.

Now, let us think about this. We are reconciled to a *spiritual* Ruler. God is Spirit, right? We are

reconciled to a *spiritual* Ruler, of a *spiritual* Kingdom—who is also our *spiritual* Father, through our *spiritual* Brother—to become part, then, of a *spiritual* church, which is also a *spiritual* Kingdom; and this is all done by God's Holy Spirit.

The capacity to see, understand, or to comprehend Christ and other people, the self, institutions (such as churches, or governments), and things in their true light is both the aim and the result of this transformation which is taking place. And the change, brethren, is radical—because it goes to the very root of our being; and it is sometimes very painful to see things in their true light.

It is a *transformation of values*. The essential transformation created is that our thoughts and ambitions are no longer focused on ourselves, but on things of the Kingdom of God. So things like money, pleasure, power, and position cease to have the value that they once had. On the other hand: love, duty, brotherhood, service, and sacrifice rise in value. They become more important and more attractive. Suffering, instead of being "doom and gloom", becomes a means of challenge and God's discipline—fully intended for our positive development.

It also changes our perspective about government—both in regard to being governed, and governing. At some times, we are in authority and, at other times, we are under authority. (We are always under the authority of God.) So, our perspective—about government—must absolutely change! Paul said that we no longer look at things according to the flesh. It says, in Romans 8: 7, that the carnal mind—the natural mind—is enmity against God's law, because it will not be subject to it. And that had better change!

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all [meaning, Christians], with unveiled face [because the blindness and the enmity against God has been taken away by this marvelous spiritual transformation, which God permits us to have.], beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord...

Now, what does that come through? It comes through the Word of God. That is where the glory of the Lord is shown to us! Connect this with John 17. It is the Word of God that leads to our separation from the world. So we see the glory of the Lord.

II Corinthians 3:18 [And we] are being transformed into the same image [The image of God, as shown through Jesus Christ in God's Word.] from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The creation that is taking place *in us* is transforming us into the image of Christ. Or, another way of saying this is that we are being developed from the glory of the secular, material man into the heavenly, spiritual Christ.

I Corinthians 15:45-49 So it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from

heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

First of all, let us notice how Christ is called "the last Adam." In verse 45, "The first man Adam" and then (in the next sentence) "the last Adam."

"The first Adam" brings to mind the concept of *the first of a new breed*, created in the image of God. That was something "new"—to have a creature in the image of God.

After being called "the last Adam," we find Him called "the second Man" in verse 47. Then, we find Him called "the heavenly Man." He is called "the second Man" (or "the second Adam") and "the heavenly Man" in order to draw our thinking away from "the first Adam"—who was, you see, the first of a new breed—to "the second Adam" (or, "the second Man") or "the heavenly Man"—who is also the *first of a new breed*. "A new creation", as it were.

I Corinthians 15:47-48 The first man was of the earth: the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those [Christians] who are heavenly.

So the new breed are those who are *after* Christ and not *after* Adam. The new breed (or, the new creation) is of a heavenly, spiritual orientation. And it is the image of "the second Man"—"the second Adam"—"the heavenly Man," which we are being transformed into. That is what we are going to bear.

I Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

In our life, there is a *process of development* going on—proceeding from that which is natural (Adam, of the dust) to that which is spiritual (Christ, of heaven). First we are *from* Adam; and his origin was from the earth. And, though Jesus was born on the earth, His origin was from heaven. So Adam is first the pattern, as to nature, of all that follow him. This is the important thing right now, for you and me. Adam was the pattern of all of mankind—all who followed him—as to nature; and those who are "of Christ" are of *the same nature* as He. Peter says that we are of "the divine nature." That is, a heavenly nature—a spiritual nature.

Here we have that dichotomy. Christians are not only earthy—they are also heavenly, because of their relationship with God through Jesus Christ! Putting these scriptures together then, thus the image of Christ is being created in us through this transformation.

I Corinthians 15:50-54 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but

we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

First, we will be changed in terms of nature and character. Then, verses 50-54, of composition. Then the transformation will be complete—at the resurrection of the dead, which will occur at the seventh trump.

I Corinthians 15:20-23 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man [through Adam] came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead [That is, through Christ—to a spiritual life.] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

In verse 24, a very significant change takes place in what the apostle Paul is writing. I mean, significant in terms of this series of sermons on government.

I Corinthians 15:24-28 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says, "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

I want you to notice the government-type words that appear in those last four or five verses.

Rule. Authority. Power. Reign. Under His feet (appears twice). Under Him (appears three times). Subject to Him (appears twice).

"The end." It is very obvious. "When comes the end," He says. The end toward which God is working is clearly one of restoring His complete governance to this earth. A true "New World Order" was begun in Christ—and it is continuing through us.

The result of His calling is that those of us who have the Spirit are directly 'in the loop' (I am using a common American, modern term here now.) We are 'in the loop' of this process. Before, we were outside the process—and we were without hope. Now our responsibility is to show God

that we will be subject to Him and, thus, will allow Him to transform us, by His creative power, into the image of His Son.

(That portion of the sermon ends there. That is a concluding statement.)

You may think that this has been a rather lengthy digression, off the subject of government. It really was not a digression at all, but a necessary step to show clearly our relation to—and our response to—government under the New Covenant.

Remember that Israel under the Old Covenant (though it was God's kingdom) was also a kingdom of this world. They were organized as both "church" and "state." And there was constituted both civil and religious government—headed by God, but clearly including men in the process. Every symbolic religious apparatus and ritual in the Old Testament shows very clearly that mankind did not have direct access to God. Instead, God was forced, by their rejection, to include men in the process.

As I mentioned to you before, God knew that this would occur. It was not an unusual thing at all. It did not catch Him by surprise. They could not govern themselves; and they could not submit to Him in a spiritual way—according to the requirements that are now laid on us under the New Covenant. So, men were in the process.

Under the New Covenant, the Kingdom of God is *not* of this world. It is a spiritual organism; and the civil aspect of government is not 'in the loop' in the same way that it was in Israel, under the Old Covenant. That is a major difference all by itself.

But does this make any difference to the Christian? What about "in the church?" Is there a hierarchy of men, operating as a government, between God and us? If so, what is their authority? How extensive is it? Do they actually rule over us—those of us who have direct access to God, with no intermediary in between—who are now directly 'within the loop' of His governance? If that rule exists, then what does it cover?

Today, we are going to cover the relationship and response of the Christian to civil government. I think that we can adequately cover this in five scriptures. We are not going to go into everything. I am just going to give you principles that will very clearly show all of us what our relationship to civil government is.

During the centuries of man's rule on earth, five different forms of government have emerged:

There is theocracy, which means "rule by God."

There is democracy. It comes in two basic forms. It means, "rule by the people." The one form is a pure, or true, democracy—in which the people act directly in their own governance. The second kind, the kind that we have here in the United States, is called a republican form of government. It is representative rule, in which the people elect those who will govern them. So it is, effectively, government from the bottom up.

Then there is oligarchy. That means "rule by few" or "rule by committee." The clearest representation of this, in our lifetime, has been in Soviet Russia—where they were ruled by the Presidium.

Then there is monarchy; and it comes in two different forms, just like democracy does. It is

"rule by king"—either absolute, as a dictator, or constitutional. The constitutional form is the kind that they have in England. The king and queen are pretty much, effectively, out of the governmental loop; but they are still there.

And the last is, in one sense, not a government at all; but it is anarchy, or "mob rule." I included this because, every once in a while, the mob takes control; and they dictate to the governed.

We have these five forms of government that we are going to have to deal with, from time to time. Those of you within the sound of my voice, we are going to have to be dealing with a republican democracy.

Let us go to Psalms 62. This psalm consists of a series of comparisons in regards to where can one in trouble turn to for salvation or relief from the problem, difficulty, pressure, tribulation, or trial that one happens to be going through? And the comparison is between God and man—in terms of who can save. The statement that we are going to read does not apply directly, in context of this sermon; but *the principle* does apply.

Psalms 62:11 God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: That
power belongs to God.

Brethren, much of our faith hangs on this verse. We believe, and we conduct our lives in the way that we do, because we believe that Power—despite all that we are able to see with our eyes. That is, the mighty mass of power of the nations with their nuclear weapons, and rockets, and million-man armies, and tanks, and planes—all of those things by which they can make war; all of those things by which they can subjugate peoples to bring about their designs, whatever they might be.

I think that you understand that in terms of religious persecution, it has always been "the power of religion" that has gotten hold of the power of the civil government that has effected the persecution against those who are the true worshippers of God. As it has been in the past, it will be in the future as well. So the power of religious government is there, and the power of civil government is there also. But the psalmist wants us to understand that *thereal power* belongs with God. We may not be able to see Him; but our faith is in our belief of that.

I think that there is in all of us the tendency to think that *he who has the power, governs*. Or, another way of saying it might be—*He who governs has the power*. This verse is showing us that *God's power is over everything earthly*. Consequently, nothing takes place without Him; and whatever is opposed to His governance must, sooner or later, give in to His will.

Now, governments are holders of power. We have a cliché that "You can't fight city hall." We say this because government seems to hold all the positions of power; and it is frustrating to deal with them. And when the government moves to do anything, we seem to be powerless before it.

I want you to compare this with Romans 13:1-5, where Paul wrote:

Romans 13:1 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.

Where is power? *Power is with God.* And from His position of power He delegates to certain individuals a portion of power and responsibility. Those to whom He delegates the power are responsible, or they are accountable, to *Him*.

Romans 13:2-5 Therefore whoever resists the authority [that is, of the civil power] resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works [There is God's intention.], but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 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 [His servant], an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath [That is, the fear of authority.] but also for conscience' sake.

In the New Testament, despite the fact that the nations have in no way made a covenant with God like Israel did (and, in many cases, the governments are despotic, chaotic, bribe-taking, abusive, unjust, uncaring, unmoving, and insensitive), their power and existence flows from God.

God is not responsible for what they do; and He does not make them do the things that they do. They have free moral agency as well. But we have to understand that they exist only because God has deemed it so.

Their purpose is seen here, in the New Testament, to be generally good. At least, it is better than the alternative—which is no government at all. The reason is that it is God's intention that the purpose of these governments—to whom He has delegated His authority—is to keep order in the community. The Christian, then, is to honor its power, as sent by God—to keep life from social chaos, to be a deterrent to evildoers, and also to be a rewarder of those who do right and good.

Now, let us go to Titus; and we will add another part to this.

Titus 3:1-2 Remind them [the people in the congregation] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one [The context has to do with the governing authorities.], to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

Let me just summarize that: Our part is to recognize that it is *our duty* to cooperate—to understand that *their government*, the government outside the church—is their way of cooperating politically for the common good. So, we are then to respect their laws and customs.

I Timothy 2:1-2 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, [And then specifically...] for kings and all who are in authority, [Now, here comes the reason—the purpose for the prayers.] that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Now remember, it is always implied in the word "govern" that someone is steering—someone is keeping order—toward a certain end.

I Timothy 2:3-4 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

This adds, I think, an interesting reason for being subject to this world's government—in that, it is very clear that, under the New Covenant, "the church", is the church and "the state" is the state. Not blended together—like it was under the Old Covenant, in Israel. Those in the church owe our loyalty to an infinitely higher Kingdom (government). And yet, we have to recognize that the church cannot perform its function without the cooperation of the unconverted state governments. The reason for this is that unless they maintain order, the gospel cannot be preached; and men will not be saved.

There is a very simple statement by James, where he says:

James 3:18 The fruit of righteousness [That which is produced by right doing.] is sown in peace [Not in warfare.]

Governments are necessary to keep peace. And the "sowing" is in the gospel. Remember the parable of the sower and the seed? It must be done *in peace*. And so our appeal to God, in prayer, is that He will permit the state (the civil government) to create order—so that we can preach the gospel, and men can be saved. We need peace to do the work of God. So, the least that we can do is to be subject to their rule.

I Peter 2:13-17 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by Him [sent by God] for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, by as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

We are to submit to every ordinance of man—to the king and the governor. We are to honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God, and honor the king. All of this is seen in the light of two

reasons that are given in this context. In verse 16, "but as the servants of God" is reason number one—because we are the servants of God. And, in verse 13, "for the Lord's sake."

I will summarize. Peter is saying that we as citizens of another Kingdom, living as pilgrims under a government that is not ours—we must never forget *who we are!* We are servants of the Most High God. We are involved in a spiritual process that is transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ. And government—response to government, and relationships to government—is very important to this process. So, our citizenship is in heaven. We are ambassadors here. We must take these relationships seriously. "For the Lord's sake" means out of regard for Him.

Consider this, then. The separation between the spiritual and the secular responsibilities of a Christian—in regard to government—are difficult to define, because it is entirely possible that there is nothing to define at all. God is "*all in all*" to us. (We just read that.) He commands us to be subject to secular government. So, submitting to secular government is, in effect, submitting to Him.

That brings it full circle. When we are honoring the power of the civil government, we are honoring the power that comes from God—or, the power as given by God. If the "state" enacts a law that is against God, since our submission to government is "for the Lord's sake", we submit to the penalties. And yet, at the same time, we are obeying God—because we are rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Let us turn to Acts 4: 18-20. Here we find Peter and the other apostles involved in a situation in which they ran afoul of the secular government.

Acts 4:18-20 And they [meaning the religious figures, part of the secular government there] called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God [Remember: "For the Lord's sake."] to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [That is, the spiritual things.]

It is essential to note that, in I Peter 2, Peter did not say that we are to obey civil governments—but to *submit to them*, or to be subject to them. This includes being subject to, or submitting to, the penalties of the law imposed when obedience to God will transgress the laws of men. So, when the established authority stands in opposition to God, it becomes anti-Christ, demonic. It then becomes the Christian's responsibility to show where his priorities lie and obey God, by submitting to the penalty men's governments impose.

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

That verse is simply a more focused repetition of the same principle given in Acts 4: 18-20. I think, then, that we can safely conclude that—under the New Covenant—any separation between God and secular government, regardless of what nation the government is located in,

occurs only when mankind enacts a law contrary to God. However, even then, we are to be subject to the secular government.

We will stop right there, understanding that there is an absolute necessity for order. We might call it government. That order must be spelled out by rules or, we might say laws, because order cannot be left to chance, or the whims of individuals. I think that both history and our own personal experience show that, when each person does his own thing, life flies to pieces.

Judges 21: 25 confirms that. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" and life was chaotic. So there must be *consent* by each individual within a group to the principles (or the rules, or the laws) in order for there to be order. There must be *conformity to rules* the group consents to, or there will be pain.

Now, who establishes the rules? Who educates and guides? Who exercises authority to correct whenever somebody disagrees with the rules, and disturbs the order? Next time we will begin to get into these questions.