

Race, Politics, and the Gospel - Kingdom Politics

Bart Box

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. (Daniel 2:20-22)

5 Principles for Kingdom Politics

- We should understand the goodness and goals of good government.

- Government is instituted by God.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

- Government is affected by the Fall, but not abrogated by the Fall.

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. (Genesis 9:5-6)

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. (The United States Constitution)

- The New Testament reaffirms the goodness and divine sanction of government.

Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mark 12:17)

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed,

revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (Romans 13:1-7)

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2:13-17)

- Government is designed by God to protect life and promote justice.
- Application:
 - We should take our vote seriously.
 - Our votes give moral agency to rulers.
 - Those rulers possess the sword of the state.
 - We should be *informed voters*.

In our representative democracy, Christians can bless their neighbors by voting for what's good and for leaders who will promote flourishing. (Bobby Scott)

[2020 Democratic Party Platform](#)

[2020 Republican Party Platform](#)

- We should understand that the church is called to be prophetic, not partisan.
 - The church is a distinct, political entity and cannot afford to be co-opted by any political actor or party.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." (John 18:36)

- The American church must resist political takeovers and surrenders.
 - The church has an irreplaceable mission.

God may use everything from local elections to global pandemics to raise nations high or bring them low. He is the Sovereign, and he leads all nations as he wills. The United States is no exception, and pastors urging their congregants to vote for either culturally religious conservatives or culturally compassionate progressives won't save our nation. We don't need nation-wide reform; we need nation-wide repentance brought about by prophetic preaching (Jer. 18:7-11). If this is true—and the Scriptures say that it is!—then

it's immeasurably more important for pastors to preach the Word and call for our nation and its leaders to repent (Jonah 3) than it is for them to convince their congregations that their candidate will save America. (Bobby Scott)

- The church must be resolute on what's biblical and be restrained on what debatable.
 - On matters of morality and justice, the church must find speak.
 - On matters of prudence, the church should take a pass.

So, for example, the Bible speaks clearly to the truth that un- born babies are made in God's image. But what's the best specific policy prescription to save unborn lives? Is it appointing justices to the Supreme Court, or changing laws, or creating certain economic incentives and safety nets? Or is it all that? Similarly, the Bible speaks clearly to the truths that God created and values ethnic and cultural diversity. It speaks clearly to the fact that he hates oppression. But what's the best specific policy prescription to address racial tensions in America? Is it justice system reform, or the payment of reparations, or something else entirely? (Greg Gilbert)

- We should beware of political idolatry.
 - We should care about politics since government involves the protection of life & the promotion of justice, but we should be careful about caring too much.
 - But, we should be warned about caring too much or caring in the wrong way.
 - Kingdom politics is sane—it recognizes the stakes involved without overstating the stakes involved.
 - The Bible rarely speaks about choosing your leaders.
 - The Bible repeatedly speaks about living under your leaders.
 - We should render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.
 - We are to be subject to the governing authorities.
 - We are to respect our governing authorities.
 - We are to honor our leaders.
 - We are to pray for kings and all those in authority.
- We should vote our (informed) conscience.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5)

- The choice in November is not as simple as many of us would like.
- To consider choices, we must think through biblical teaching on governments and leaders.

- Governments should protect life and promote justice.
- Leaders should reflect godly character and virtue.

By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gifts tears it down.
(Proverbs 29:4)

If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever.
(Proverbs 29:14)

- When no candidate checks all the boxes, we have to make both theological and, then, political judgments.
 - Theological judgments are more straight-line judgments—right vs. wrong.
 - Political judgments weigh most important issues and think through probabilities and possibilities.
- And, of course, we may determine that our consciences won't allow a vote for either candidate and we pursue a different route (a conscientious objection).
- We should remember Christ's Kingdom is forever.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (Matthew 4:8-9)

- The Gospels demonstrate that we have a better kingdom than this world.
- This is the kingdom that should animate our lives and speak to our hearts.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10)