

Biblical Underpinnings of American Political Authority
A LOOK AT GOD & GOVERNMENT

In an Imperfect World of Imperfect People
WHY GOVERNMENT?

SOME DEFINITIONS OF "GOVERNMENT"

- × Dictionary:
 - + "the political direction and control exercised over the actions of the members, citizens, or inhabitants of communities, societies, and states"
 - + "the organization that is the governing authority of a political unit"

- × Children's Dictionary:
 - + "an established form of political rule"
 - + "control and direction of public business"

WHY IS GOVERNMENT NECESSARY?

- ✘ Sin/evil exists
 - + Murder in the first family – Gen. 4:8

- ✘ Individuals fail to restrain themselves
 - + Thoughts were “evil continually” – Gen. 6:5

- ✘ Communities disintegrate without guidance
 - + “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” – Jud. 17:6

GOVERNMENT WAS ESTABLISHED BY GOD

- ✘ Genesis 9:6 (in response to murder)
 - + “Whoever sheds **man’s blood**, By man His **blood** shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”

- ✘ Guidelines given to Israelites – Exodus 21-22
 - + Crime and punishment/restitution
 - + Human & moral relationships
 - + Property rights, including animals
 - + Financial & business matters, including the poor and needy

- ✘ Authority comes from God
 - + Prov. 8:15-16 “By me kings reign, And rulers decree . . .”
 - + Rom. 13:1-7 “*there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God*”

GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZED BY JESUS

- ✘ Matthew 22:21 (see also Luke 20:25)
 - + “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

- ✘ John 19:10-11
 - + Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”
 - + Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

Specific Biblically Authorized

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT

ADMINISTER JUSTICE & PROTECTION

- × Judge – Psalms 72:1-2
 - + “Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, And Your poor with justice.”
- × Protect – Psalms 72:4, 14
 - + “He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor.”
 - + “He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; And precious shall be their blood in His sight.”

BEAR THE SWORD

- × Punish
 - + Rom. 13:4 “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, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”
 - + 1 Pet. 2:13-14 “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake . . . as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.”

Brief Overview of the Political Foundations for
OUR AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE - 1776

- ✘ "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
- ✘ That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.
- ✘ That whenever any Form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION - 1787

- ✘ "WE, THE PEOPLE of the United States,
 - + in Order to form a more perfect Union,
 - + establish Justice,
 - + insure domestic Tranquility,
 - + provide for the common defense,
 - + 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."

BILL OF RIGHTS – 1791

- ✘ 1st - Establishment Clause; Free Exercise Clause; freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly; right to petition
- ✘ 2nd - Right to keep and bear arms
- ✘ 3rd - Protection from quartering of troops
- ✘ 4th - Protection from unreasonable search and seizure
- ✘ 5th - Due process, double jeopardy, self-incrimination, eminent domain
- ✘ 6th - Trial by jury, rights of the accused; Confrontation Clause, speedy trial, public trial, subpoena power, right to counsel
- ✘ 7th - Civil trial by jury
- ✘ 8th - Prohibition of excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment
- ✘ 9th - Protection of rights not specifically enumerated
- ✘ 10th - Powers reserved to the states or the people

Defining Features and Biblical Examples for
OUR AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IS FROM GOD

- ✘ God's Authority Acknowledged
 - + Declaration of Independence
 - + Oath of Office
 - + Currency
 - + Pledge of Allegiance
 - + National Motto "In God We Trust"
 - + Much, much more
- ✘ Romans 13:1-7
 - + 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.
 - + Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.
 - + For rulers are not a terror to good works, 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, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.
 - + Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.
 - + For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.
 - + Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

RULE BY LAW – ORDERLY & WRITTEN

- × Written Constitution and Laws
- × Limited Government
- × Exodus 18-23
 - + Moses' father-in-law Jethro recommends court system and appeals process (Exo. 18:1-27)
 - + Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:1-21)
 - + Law given (Exo. 21-23)
 - × Servants
 - × Violence
 - × Animal control
 - × Responsibility for property
 - × Moral and ceremonial
 - × Justice for all
 - × Sabbaths and annual feasts

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

- × Multiple leaders at multiple levels
- × Biblical examples:
 - + Exodus 18:21 (Jethro)
 - × "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."
 - + Deuteronomy 1:9-18 (Moses)
 - × Verse 13: "Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you."
 - × Verse 15: "So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes."
 - + Proverbs 11:14
 - × "Where there is no counsel, the people fail; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety."
 - + Proverbs 24:6
 - × "For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety."

ELECTED LEADERS

- × Constitutionally-defined offices and scheduled elections
 - + Government "of the people, by the people, for the people"
 - + Leaders under authority of Constitution, law and the people
- × 1 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 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, but as bondservants of God.
 - + Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

- ✘ Separation of Powers
 - + Executive, Legislative & Judicial
 - + Isaiah 33:22 (For the LORD is our Judge,
The LORD is our Lawgiver,
The LORD is our King;
He will save us);
- ✘ Checks and Balances
 - + Power corrupts
 - + Bi-cameral Legislative branch
 - + Federal, state & local jurisdictions & duties

FREE ENTERPRISE

- ✘ Private property rights
 - + Exod. 20:15 "You shall not steal."
 - + Exod. 20:17 "You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's."
- ✘ All should work - 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
 - + "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you:
 - + nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,
 - + not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.
 - + For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.
 - + For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.
 - + Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread."

RESPONSIBILITIES TO GOVERNMENT

CHRISTIAN DUTIES

- × Submission
 - + Rom. 13:1a "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities."
 - + Titus 3:1 "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work."
 - + 1 Pet. 2:13 "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake . . ."
- × Taxes, Respect & Honor
 - + Rom 13:7 "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."
- × Prayer
 - + 1 Tim. 2:1-2 "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."

DISOBEDIENCE OF GOVERNMENT

SHOULD CHRISTIANS EVER DISOBEY?

- × Sometimes God and government clash
- × Government authority is not unlimited
- × The Bible records many valid examples
 - + Government usurped God's authority
 - + Demanded obedience contrary to God's Word
 - + Examples
 - × 3 Israelite Men (bowing down) – Daniel 3
 - × Daniel (prayer) – Daniel 6
 - × Peter (preaching) – Acts 5:27-29
 - × Paul (exercised legal rights when falsely arrested) - Acts 16:35-40
- × Beware of sinful motives
- × Expect to suffer consequences

Now What Should We Do?
SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

MUCH IS EXPECTED OF US

- × Our government is “of the people, by the people, for the people” - Lincoln (Nov. 19, 1863)
- × Luke 12:48b holds us accountable to God
 - + “For everyone to whom **much is given**, from him **much** will be required; and to whom **much** has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

OUR RESPONSE OPTIONS INCLUDE

- × Respect and obedience
- × Praying for those in authority
- × Voting
- × Petition and feedback
- × Influencing others
- × Running for office
- × Military, civil and other service

HOW SHOULD WE VOTE?

- × God's Example - 1 Samuel 16:7
 - + But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
- × Other Passages:
 - + Exo. 3-4 (Moses & Aaron; esp. 4:10-16)
 - + Exo. 18:21 (Jethro's advice to Moses for judges)
 - + 1 Tim. 3:1-13 (for church leaders)
 - + Titus 1:4-9 (for church leaders)

SOURCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- × Faith Facts. "The Bible and Government."
<http://www.faithfacts.org/christ-and-the-culture/the-bible-and-government>
- × Christ in You Ministries. Commentaries & Study Outlines. "Government."
<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/government.html>
- × WallBuilders.
<http://www.wallbuilders.com/>
