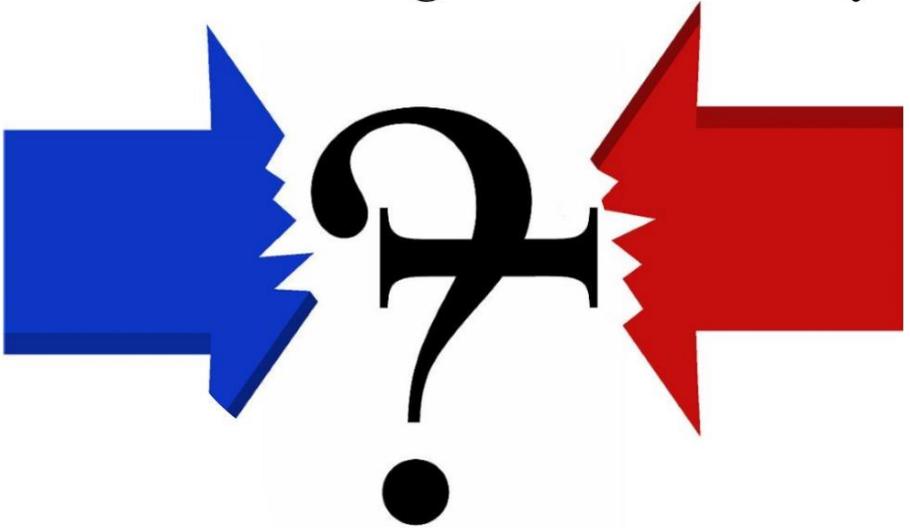


Summer Nights @Trinity



Jesus and Politics

## General Outline

- **June 1<sup>st</sup>: God's Caesar**
  - The Rules and the Basics
  - What does the Bible say about Government?
  - How can we disagree, dialogue and debate BETTER?
- **June 8<sup>th</sup>: God's Christendom**
  - Church and State
  - Patriotism, Nationalism and the Kingdom of God
- **June 15<sup>th</sup>: God's Counter Culture**
  - Polarized and Partisan
  - Red vs Blue vs ??
- **June 22<sup>nd</sup>: God's Concerns**
  - What is underneath and behind the Issues we debate?
  - Ethical Foundations
  - Examples
- **June 29<sup>th</sup>: God's Kingdom**
  - Civility
  - Public vs Private
  - Who are we to BE in this world?

## My Hopes and Goals

- **Goal:** Help us (as Christians) think deeper, speak more civilly, and be more compassionate about political issues
  - **Sub Goal:** Not just find common ground, but to borrow some words from MLK, the goal is to be on 'higher ground'...
- **Goal:** Give us tools for understanding issues, ourselves, others, and God better
- **Secret Goal:** Get Christians to stop 'liking' dumb things on Facebook without ANY critical thought!

## Rules, Guidelines, and Points of View

- God isn't on a side: God isn't a Republican and God isn't a Democrat.
  - We will find things that are correct on BOTH sides (and things that are VERY WRONG on both sides)
  - If, at any point in these lectures, you think: "Gotcha! Take that! See, I'm right!" – then you either misheard me, or I misspoke.
    - **MATTHEW 7:1-5** "DO NOT JUDGE, OR YOU TOO WILL BE JUDGED. <sup>2</sup> FOR IN THE SAME WAY YOU JUDGE OTHERS, YOU WILL BE JUDGED, AND WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE, IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU. <sup>3</sup> "WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK OF SAWDUST IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE AND PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE?" <sup>4</sup> HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, 'LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,' WHEN ALL THE TIME THERE IS A PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE? <sup>5</sup> YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST TAKE THE PLANK OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO REMOVE THE SPECK FROM YOUR BROTHER'S EYE.
    - Not only that... but we are STRONGLY biased towards what we already believe.
- General Rules of All My Classes:
  - The Bible is our ultimate authority
  - Ask Questions
- **Disclaimer 1:** This topic is HUGE, and the more I've gotten into it the more I realize how little I know about politics, history, ethics, sociology, biology, philosophy, psychology, and SO many other relevant studies!
- **Disclaimer2:** "In the United States, since 1954 the Internal Revenue Service has had regulations that prohibit pastors or churches from explicitly saying that they support or oppose any candidates by name (though they are still allowed to take positions on moral issues that are part of an election campaign)." (Grudem 75)

## The Current State of Things

- Too Much Anger and Frustration
- Too Much Partisanship
- Not enough Listening and Reflection
  - “Add to that the polarization in the political and governmental institutions in Washington, D.C., and we have a historic set of challenges that demand attention and action that go well beyond a testy exchange on cable television or a food fight in the blogosphere. Those atrophied muscles of the national character that the president mentioned in Dresden demand our attention. Can they be developed so that they provide the strength to carry us through this treacherous passage? Do we have the will to restore a sense of national purpose that unites us rather than divides us? Shouldn’t we take a realistic inventory of our strengths, needs, objectives, and challenges as we head into a new century in a changed world? None of us has all the answers, but so many of the problems are self-evident that we should begin by first addressing those that threaten our core values: political pluralism, broad-based economic opportunity, national security secured by means other than the barrel of a gun, cultural and religious tolerance. The first step: Establish a climate for listening as well as for shouting.” (Brokaw, Tom. *The Time of Our Lives: A conversation about America* (Kindle Locations 360-368). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)
- Wrong Rhetoric
  - “Slashing rhetoric and outrageous characterizations have long been part of the American national political dialogue— Abraham Lincoln was portrayed as a subhuman ape in the highly partisan newspapers of his time— but modern means of communication are now so pervasive and penetrating they might as well be part of the air we breathe, and therefore they require tempered remarks from all sides. Otherwise, that air just becomes more and more

toxic until it is suffocating.” (Brokaw, Tom. *The Time of Our Lives: A conversation about America* (Kindle Locations 433-436). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

- “The country’s 24 hour political pundit perpetual panic conflictinator did not cause our problems but its existence makes solving them that much harder. The press can hold its magnifying up to our problems bringing them into focus, illuminating issues heretofore unseen or they can use that magnifying glass to light ants on fire and then perhaps host a week of shows on the sudden, unexpected dangerous flaming ant epidemic. ... If we amplify everything we hear nothing.” – John Stewart
- Not enough Politics
  - “Politics is an activity in which you recognize the simultaneous existence of different groups, interests and opinions. You try to find some way to balance or reconcile or compromise those interests, or at least a majority of them. You follow a set of rules, enshrined in a constitution or in custom, to help you reach these compromises in a way everybody considers legitimate. The downside of politics is that people never really get everything they want. It’s messy, limited and no issue is ever really settled. Politics is a muddled activity in which people have to recognize restraints and settle for less than they want. Disappointment is normal. But that’s sort of the beauty of politics, too. It involves an endless conversation in which we learn about other people and see things from their vantage point and try to balance their needs against our own. Plus, it’s better than the alternative: rule by some authoritarian tyrant who tries to govern by clobbering everyone in his way.” (David Brooks [The Governing Cancer of our Time](#))
- Christians Are Making it WORSE!

## God and Government (An Introduction)

- From the Beginning (Genesis)
- In the Middle
- To the End
  - **REVELATION 21:1-3** THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH HAD PASSED AWAY, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SEA. <sup>2</sup> I SAW THE HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, PREPARED AS A BRIDE BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED FOR HER HUSBAND. <sup>3</sup> AND I HEARD A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE SAYING, "NOW THE DWELLING OF GOD IS WITH MEN, AND HE WILL LIVE WITH THEM. THEY WILL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF WILL BE WITH THEM AND BE THEIR GOD.
- God sets up Governments:
  - To Be Under HIS authority
    - **PSALM 22:28** FOR DOMINION BELONGS TO THE LORD AND HE RULES OVER THE NATIONS.
    - **PSALM 103:19** THE LORD HAS ESTABLISHED HIS THRONE IN HEAVEN, AND HIS KINGDOM RULES OVER ALL.
    - **JOHN 19:11** JESUS ANSWERED, "YOU WOULD HAVE NO POWER OVER ME IF IT WERE NOT GIVEN TO YOU FROM ABOVE. THEREFORE THE ONE WHO HANDED ME OVER TO YOU IS GUILTY OF A GREATER SIN."
  - To bring Order from Chaos
    - "Society requires organization. If men are to live together in the world they must be organized in some manner. This has been recognized in all times and places and is seen on all levels of human society from the jungle tribe to the world empire. Ideally the object of government is to achieve order with a minimum of restraint while permitting a maximum of freedom to the individual." (Tozer Chapter 13)
  - To Further Justice and Promote Righteousness

- For his glory
  - **ACTS 17:26-27** FROM ONE MAN HE MADE EVERY NATION OF MEN, THAT THEY SHOULD INHABIT THE WHOLE EARTH; AND HE DETERMINED THE TIMES SET FOR THEM AND THE EXACT PLACES WHERE THEY SHOULD LIVE. <sup>27</sup> GOD DID THIS SO THAT MEN WOULD SEEK HIM AND PERHAPS REACH OUT FOR HIM AND FIND HIM, THOUGH HE IS NOT FAR FROM EACH ONE OF US.
  - **COLOSSIANS 1:16** FOR BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED: THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES OR POWERS OR RULERS OR AUTHORITIES; ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM AND FOR HIM.
- Ultimately Governments Will Fall Short
  - **1 SAMUEL 8:11-18**
- God can/does use even BAD Governments Despite Their Shortcomings
  - **ISAIAH 44:28 - 45:4** WHO SAYS OF CYRUS, 'HE IS MY SHEPHERD AND WILL ACCOMPLISH ALL THAT I PLEASE; HE WILL SAY OF JERUSALEM, "LET IT BE REBUILT," AND OF THE TEMPLE, "LET ITS FOUNDATIONS BE LAID.'" <sup>45:1</sup> "THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS TO HIS ANOINTED, TO CYRUS, WHOSE RIGHT HAND I TAKE HOLD OF TO SUBDUE NATIONS BEFORE HIM AND TO STRIP KINGS OF THEIR ARMOR, TO OPEN DOORS BEFORE HIM SO THAT GATES WILL NOT BE SHUT: <sup>2</sup> I WILL GO BEFORE YOU AND WILL LEVEL THE MOUNTAINS; I WILL BREAK DOWN GATES OF BRONZE AND CUT THROUGH BARS OF IRON. <sup>3</sup> I WILL GIVE YOU THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS, RICHES STORED IN SECRET PLACES, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, WHO SUMMONS YOU BY NAME. <sup>4</sup> FOR THE SAKE OF JACOB MY SERVANT, OF ISRAEL MY CHOSEN, I SUMMON YOU BY NAME AND BESTOW ON YOU A TITLE OF HONOR, THOUGH YOU DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE ME.

## Approaches to Political Theology

- Augustine vs Aquinas
  - Thomas Aquinas:
    - Creation is created good, and so Government is to promote human flourishing
    - “Thomistic political theologies share Thomas’s faith in the goodness of the created order and his conviction that God intends human government to contribute to human flourishing – to seek the common good.” (Phillips 33)
  - Augustine:
    - Creation is fallen, so we can’t expect or hope for that much good from Government
    - “Augustinian political theologies, by contrast, are marked by the conviction that the fallen condition of humanity so significantly obscures the goodness of the original created order that we cannot expect so much from one another or from human institutions.” (Phillips 33)
  - C.S. Lewis: “There are two opposite reasons for being a democrat. You may think all men so good that they deserve a share in the government of the commonwealth, and so wise that the commonwealth needs their advice. That is, in my opinion, the false romantic doctrine of democracy. On the other hand, you may believe fallen men to be so wicked that not one of them can be trusted with any irresponsible power over his fellows. That I believe to be the true ground of democracy.” (Schansberg 33)
- Public Theology vs Political Theology
  - Political Theology
    - We, as Christians should be IN politics
      - With a Prophetic Voice
    - “[Stackhouse] suggests that Political Theology ‘tends to see politics, focused on

a centralized government, as the comprehending institution of society and the primary manifestation and guarantor of public justice’.” (Phillips 49)

- Public Theology
  - We, as Christians, should be at work changing the public... which will, in turn, change politics
  - “By contrast, according to Stackhouse, Public Theology understands that ‘political parties, regimes and policies come and go; they are always necessary, but they are also the by-product of those religious, cultural, familial, economic and social traditions that are prior to government, and every government is, sooner or later, accountable to them’. Thus, instead of focusing on the centralized state as the primary agent of the transformation of societies, Public Theologians seek to enable Christian ‘principles and purposes’ to ‘work their way through the convictions of the people and the policies of the multiple institutions of civil society where the people live and work and play, that make up the primary public realm’.” (Phillips 49)
- Both agree that Christianity shouldn’t be only private and spiritual
- From Above vs From Below
  - From Below
    - Government is established and founded by ‘We the people’. We decide that we need someone to lead and govern us, and we give them authority
  - From Above
    - Government is established by God.

## Christians and Governments

- Obedience
  - **ECCLESIASTES 10:20** DO NOT REVILE THE KING EVEN IN YOUR THOUGHTS, OR CURSE THE RICH IN YOUR BEDROOM, BECAUSE A BIRD OF THE AIR MAY CARRY YOUR WORDS, AND A BIRD ON THE WING MAY REPORT WHAT YOU SAY.
  - **1 TIMOTHY 2:1-3** I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL, THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE-- <sup>2</sup> FOR KINGS AND ALL THOSE IN AUTHORITY, THAT WE MAY LIVE PEACEFUL AND QUIET LIVES IN ALL GODLINESS AND HOLINESS. <sup>3</sup> THIS IS GOOD, AND PLEASURES GOD OUR SAVIOR,
  - **ROMANS 13:1-7** EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT HIMSELF TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES, FOR THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT THAT WHICH GOD HAS ESTABLISHED. THE AUTHORITIES THAT EXIST HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY GOD. <sup>2</sup> CONSEQUENTLY, HE WHO REBELS AGAINST THE AUTHORITY IS REBELLING AGAINST WHAT GOD HAS INSTITUTED, AND THOSE WHO DO SO WILL BRING JUDGMENT ON THEMSELVES. <sup>3</sup> FOR RULERS HOLD NO TERROR FOR THOSE WHO DO RIGHT, BUT FOR THOSE WHO DO WRONG. DO YOU WANT TO BE FREE FROM FEAR OF THE ONE IN AUTHORITY? THEN DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND HE WILL COMMEND YOU. <sup>4</sup> FOR HE IS GOD'S SERVANT TO DO YOU GOOD. BUT IF YOU DO WRONG, BE AFRAID, FOR HE DOES NOT BEAR THE SWORD FOR NOTHING. HE IS GOD'S SERVANT, AN AGENT OF WRATH TO BRING PUNISHMENT ON THE WRONGDOER. <sup>5</sup> THEREFORE, IT IS NECESSARY TO SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITIES, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE PUNISHMENT BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE. <sup>6</sup> THIS IS ALSO WHY YOU PAY TAXES, FOR THE AUTHORITIES ARE GOD'S SERVANTS, WHO GIVE THEIR FULL TIME TO GOVERNING. <sup>7</sup> GIVE EVERYONE WHAT YOU OWE HIM: IF YOU OWE TAXES, PAY TAXES; IF REVENUE, THEN REVENUE; IF RESPECT, THEN RESPECT; IF HONOR, THEN HONOR.

- **1 PETER 2:11-17** DEAR FRIENDS, I URGE YOU, AS ALIENS AND STRANGERS IN THE WORLD, TO ABSTAIN FROM SINFUL DESIRES, WHICH WAR AGAINST YOUR SOUL. <sup>12</sup> LIVE SUCH GOOD LIVES AMONG THE PAGANS THAT, THOUGH THEY ACCUSE YOU OF DOING WRONG, THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY GOD ON THE DAY HE VISITS US. <sup>13</sup> SUBMIT YOURSELVES FOR THE LORD'S SAKE TO EVERY AUTHORITY INSTITUTED AMONG MEN: WHETHER TO THE KING, AS THE SUPREME AUTHORITY, <sup>14</sup> OR TO GOVERNORS, WHO ARE SENT BY HIM TO PUNISH THOSE WHO DO WRONG AND TO COMMEND THOSE WHO DO RIGHT. <sup>15</sup> FOR IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT BY DOING GOOD YOU SHOULD SILENCE THE IGNORANT TALK OF FOOLISH MEN. <sup>16</sup> LIVE AS FREE MEN, BUT DO NOT USE YOUR FREEDOM AS A COVER-UP FOR EVIL; LIVE AS SERVANTS OF GOD. <sup>17</sup> SHOW PROPER RESPECT TO EVERYONE: LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS, FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING.
- Disobedience?
  - **ACTS 4:18-20** THEN THEY CALLED THEM IN AGAIN AND COMMANDED THEM NOT TO SPEAK OR TEACH AT ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS. <sup>19</sup> BUT PETER AND JOHN REPLIED, "JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES WHETHER IT IS RIGHT IN GOD'S SIGHT TO OBEY YOU RATHER THAN GOD." <sup>20</sup> FOR WE CANNOT HELP SPEAKING ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD."
  - **ACTS 5:29** PETER AND THE OTHER APOSTLES REPLIED: "WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN!"
  - **DANIEL 3:16-18** SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO REPLIED TO THE KING, "O NEBUCHADNEZZAR, WE DO NOT NEED TO DEFEND OURSELVES BEFORE YOU IN THIS MATTER. <sup>17</sup> IF WE ARE THROWN INTO THE BLAZING FURNACE, THE GOD WE SERVE IS ABLE TO SAVE US FROM IT, AND HE WILL RESCUE US FROM YOUR HAND, O KING. <sup>18</sup> BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT, WE WANT YOU TO KNOW, O KING, THAT WE WILL NOT SERVE YOUR GODS OR WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF GOLD YOU HAVE SET UP."

- **EXODUS 1:17** THE MIDWIVES, HOWEVER, FEARED GOD AND DID NOT DO WHAT THE KING OF EGYPT HAD TOLD THEM TO DO; THEY LET THE BOYS LIVE.
- 2 Themes in Tension
  - Lean towards Obedience and Trust
  - But recognize you're under God's authority first and foremost
- Participation (Working For Change Within)
  - **ESTHER 4:16** "GO, GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE JEWS WHO ARE IN SUSA, AND FAST FOR ME. DO NOT EAT OR DRINK FOR THREE DAYS, NIGHT OR DAY. I AND MY MAIDS WILL FAST AS YOU DO. WHEN THIS IS DONE, I WILL GO TO THE KING, EVEN THOUGH IT IS AGAINST THE LAW. AND IF I PERISH, I PERISH."
  - Ezra and Nehemiah
  - **JEREMIAH 29:4-7** THIS IS WHAT THE LORD ALMIGHTY, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, SAYS TO ALL THOSE I CARRIED INTO EXILE FROM JERUSALEM TO BABYLON: <sup>5</sup> "BUILD HOUSES AND SETTLE DOWN; PLANT GARDENS AND EAT WHAT THEY PRODUCE. <sup>6</sup> MARRY AND HAVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS; FIND WIVES FOR YOUR SONS AND GIVE YOUR DAUGHTERS IN MARRIAGE, SO THAT THEY TOO MAY HAVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS. INCREASE IN NUMBER THERE; DO NOT DECREASE. <sup>7</sup> ALSO, SEEK THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF THE CITY TO WHICH I HAVE CARRIED YOU INTO EXILE. PRAY TO THE LORD FOR IT, BECAUSE IF IT PROSPERS, YOU TOO WILL PROSPER."

### **Further Wisdom from The Confessions**

- Westminster Confession
  - **Of the Civil Magistrate**
  - 1. God, the Supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.

- The Theological Declaration of Barmen
  - “Most Germans took the union of Christianity, nationalism, and militarism for granted, and the patriotic sentiments were equated with Christian truth. The German Christians exalted the racially pure nation and the rule of Hitler as God’s will for the German people.” ... “The chief item of business was discussion of a declaration to appeal to the Evangelical churches of Germany to stand firm against the German Christian accommodation to National Socialism.”(BOC 246)
  - 5. “Fear God. Honor the emperor.” (1 Peter 2:17.) Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfills this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God’s commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things.
  - We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church’s vocation as well.
  - We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

## **The Political Dimension of the Church**

- **1 PETER 2: 9 – 12**<sup>9</sup> BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE BELONGING TO GOD, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT. <sup>10</sup> ONCE YOU WERE NOT A PEOPLE, BUT NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD; ONCE YOU HAD NOT RECEIVED MERCY, BUT NOW YOU HAVE RECEIVED MERCY. <sup>11</sup> DEAR FRIENDS, I URGE YOU, AS ALIENS AND STRANGERS IN THE WORLD, TO ABSTAIN FROM SINFUL DESIRES, WHICH WAR AGAINST YOUR SOUL. <sup>12</sup> LIVE SUCH GOOD LIVES AMONG THE PAGANS THAT, THOUGH THEY ACCUSE YOU OF DOING WRONG, THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY GOD ON THE DAY HE VISITS US.



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