

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

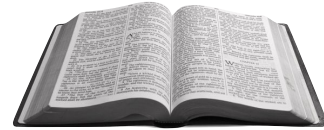
1 Timothy 2:1-3

Lesson #17

Church and state

04/28/2019

How to read the Old Testament



Ecclesiastes 10:2

“A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s heart directs him toward the left.”

1

The Revolutionary War

Many colonial ministers justified the revolt by citing Scripture.

Largely from
the O.T.
(Exodus)

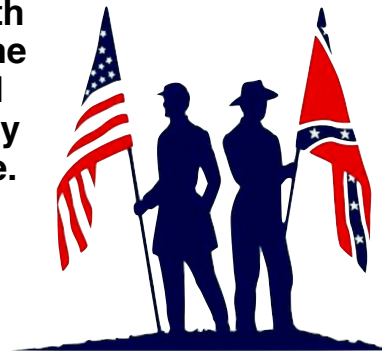


2

The Civil War

Christian ministers in both the north and the south justified their position by citing Scripture.

Largely from
the O.T.
(slavery)



3

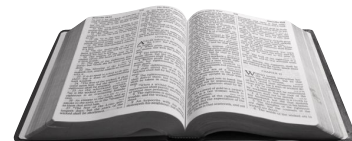
How to read the Old Testament



Last week:
We noted the difference
between O.T. and N.T. **Hope.**

4

How to read the Old Testament



This week:
We will apply it to issues of
Church and State.

5



6

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” *Hebrews 11:6*

Navigating life calls for a fear of God expressed in courageous faith **based on realistic expectations tied to a secure hope.**

We can't expect faith to conquer our fears **while we embrace false hopes with unrealistic expectations.**

7

True or False

1. America was founded as a **Christian nation**.
2. God has a special **covenant** with America making it His light and hope for the world.
3. America is in danger of **losing God's favor** unless it repents of its moral decline.
4. Restoring America to social, moral, and economic greatness should be a **high priority** for Christians.
5. Christian's first agenda should be to **elect** Christians to office, **restore** America's moral values, and **reduce** the size of government.
6. Political **conservatives** best represent the Biblical position in American politics.

8

7. **Big government** is inconsistent with Biblical teaching.
8. **Democracy** was God's ordained form of gov. in the Bible.
9. **Private ownership** of property was implied in Biblical Law.
10. Political **liberals** are more sensitive to social justice than are conservatives.

These popular beliefs should be tested against Scripture.

The Scripture has a lot to say about these issues but it may not be what we expect or want to hear.

9

The father of lies wants us to find hope in anything and everything but God and His Kingdom.

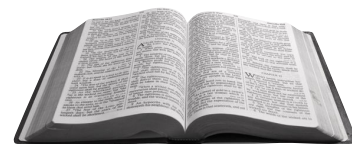


The greatest lies we tell are the ones we tell to ourselves.

Satan's temptation of Jesus was not to discard the Bible but to distort its message. (Matt.4:1-11)

10

How to read the Old Testament



How are we to read the O.T. without distorting it?



11

Church and state under the Old Covenant.

The Kingdom is a physical "Theocracy".

- **Palestine was a covenant gift** - to Israel from God as a holy place of rest and blessing. (**Gen.12:1**)
- **Feudal system** - Israelites were stewards of a land, owned by God. (**Lev.25:23**)
- **No private ownership of property** - return land to its original (manager) after 50 years - Year of Jubilee. (**Lev.25:8-13,23**)
- **Law controlled civil life** - tithes and support for the poor were not voluntary. (**Lev.19:9-10**)
- **Leaders were not elected** but rather appointed by God. Israel's demand to choose its own kings was seen as rebellious. (**1 Sam.8:1-22; 12:17**)

12

Church and state under the New Covenant.

The Kingdom is spiritual "organism".

- "My kingdom is not of this world". **Jn.18:36**
- "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". **Matt. 22:21**
- "Do good to all men but especially to the household of faith". **Gal.6:10**
- "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution," **1 Pet.2:13**
- "You are the salt of the earth, . . . You are the light of the world." **Matt.5:13-14**

13

Some general observations on the N.T. teaching.

- It does not specify **any one form** of human government as ordained of God.
- It leaves the impression that Christians can **thrive in many forms** of government.
- It views government primarily as an **order and peacekeeping** system.
- It calls Christians to **submit** to it, support it, and pray for it but not place their hope or faith in it or expect to control it.
- The church is nowhere **called to reform** the state or treat it as a holy covenant gift.

14

Matthew 22:21

"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

- **Three mistakes that Christian citizens often make?**



15

Mistake #1 Taking an O.T. view of our home address

In this world Christians are **ALIEN / AMBASSADORS**.

- Don't get too **COMFORTABLE** in our rented quarters.
- Don't become too **INVESTED** in our temporary home.
- This present world is not suited for or the site of God's eternal **KINGDOM**.



16

2 Chronicles 7:14

". . . (If) **My people** who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and **turn from their wicked ways**, **then** I will hear from heaven, will **forgive** their sin and will **heal their land**."

2 Chronicles 7:20

"(if not) then I will uproot you from **My land which I have given you**."

Assumptions

- "My people" = Israelites, Christians?
- "their land" = Palestine, America?
- If Christians pray and America turns from its sins it will be "healed".



17

Christian alien ambassadors have multiple citizenships which often conflict.



Citizens of the Kingdom of God

1 Peter 1:1

"To those who reside as aliens ... chosen of God"



Citizens of the World of humanity



Citizens of the Country of residence

18

American values that cripple the church

- **Narcissism** - God's plan is for my personal happiness.
- **Pragmatism** - If it works it must be of God.
- **Power** is political, material wealth, and position.
- **Competition** makes everything better.
- **Democracy** - Majority rule.
- **Success** is defined by material and monetary growth and size.



19

As alien ambassadors we are not called to reform or renew the fallen world but to be light and salt in and to it.

Jeremiah 29:7

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and **pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.**"

20

1 Timothy 2

"¹ First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, **so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.** ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,"

21

Mistake #2

Placing too much faith and hope in:

Human government, American uniqueness, Political power

- But isn't America a Christian nation?
- Aren't Christians to fight for restoring respect for Biblical values in American culture?



22

1. Today's Christian nationalists have a good portion of early American history on their side.

Puritan Christians believed that:

- Old Testament Israel is our story. (The O.T. is to be applied directly to our situation.)
- Political freedom is a part of the Gospel. (There was a need to justify a break from England.)
- Providence is assurance of God's favor. (The success of the American Revolution is a sign of God's sovereign hand on America.)
- Theonomy (Modern day Reconstructionists). (Have tried to revive a strict rule of Biblical Law in America.)

23

2. The American system assumes a Biblical ethic and spirit to function properly.



24

Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

1.

Capitalism becomes the exploitation of the poor by the rich.



25

Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

1.

Democracy becomes an endless litigation of rights or the marginalization of the minority by the majority.



26

Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

3.

Pluralism dignifies every kind of divergence as a form of creativity.



27

“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

John Adams



28

3. The Capital and Constitution contain Biblical references.



On the doors to the Supreme Court are displayed the Ten Commandments.

29

4. The moral Law of Moses not the Gospel or Jesus is the subject.



The Biblical inscriptions, **center attention on the civil law and Moses** not the Gospel and Jesus.

The U.S. was the first Western nation to **omit explicitly Christian symbolism** from its flag and other natural symbols.

30

Was (is) America a Christian nation?

Culturally YES & NO!

- 75% profess Christian faith and many of our core values have been shaped by **BIBLICAL ETHICS**, (which is not the same as orthodox Christianity).

Constitutionally NO!

- the Christian faith is not mentioned while enlightenment ideas of freedom from external authority prevail.

31

Proposed amendment to the U.S. constitution in 1863 by the National Reform Association (NRA)

“We, the people of the United States, (recognizing the being and attributes of Almighty God, the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, the law of God as the paramount rule, and Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior and Lord of all) in order to form a more perfect union, . . .”

This proposal was rejected, not because it mentioned “God” but because it was explicitly Christian.

32

5. Freemasonry captures the soul of the U.S. Constitution’s spirit.



Geometry (reason)
God (religion)
Gnosis (righteousness)

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM,
“a new order has begun.”

rational, moral, theism

- virtue, courage, loyalty, prudence, truthfulness, compassion, etc.

33

20 GREATEST NAMES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

- John Adams - Spoke favorably of Freemasonry -- never joined
- Samuel Adams - (Close and principle associate of Hancock, Revere & other Masons)
- Ethan Allen - Mason
- Edmund Burke - Mason
- John Claypoole - Mason
- William Dawes - Mason
- Benjamin Franklin - Mason
- Nathan Hale - No evidence of Masonic connections
- John Hancock - Mason
- Benjamin Harrison - No evidence of Masonic connections
- Patrick Henry - No evidence of Masonic connections
- Thomas Jefferson - Deist with some evidence of Masonic connections
- John Paul Jones - Mason
- Francis Scott Key - No evidence of Masonic connections
- Robert Livingston - Mason
- James Madison - Some evidence of Masonic membership
- Thomas Paine - Humanist
- Paul Revere - Mason
- Colonel Benjamin Tupper - Mason
- George Washington - Mason
- Daniel Webster - Some evidence of Masonic connections

Summary: 10 Masons, 3 probable Masons, 1 Humanist, 2 Advocates of Freemasonry, 4 no record of connections with Freemasonry

34

Three pillars of American political culture



European
Enlightenment



Greco Roman
Government



Biblical
moral values

Freedom for
all people

Justice for
each person

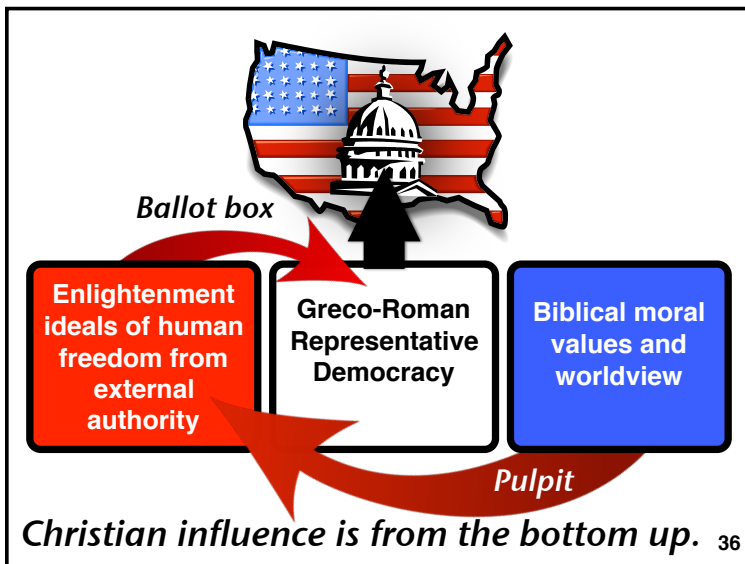
Dignity for
every soul

Rights

Representation

Reverence

35



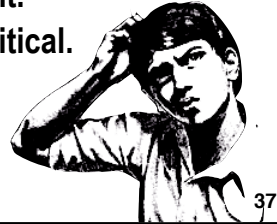
Mistake #2

Placing too much faith and hope in:

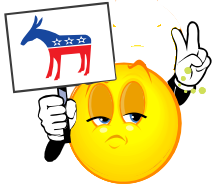
Human government, American uniqueness, Political power

God may not be as interested as we are in making **AMERICA GREAT**.

- The N.T. does not prescribe any one **FORM** of human government.
- Kingdom **POWER** is not political.
- **AMERICA** does not occupy a special place in God's kingdom.



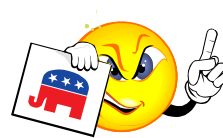
The religious **left** is tempted to:



- Give the state a Messianic role in the life of people. **"The state functions as savior."**
- Define the human dilemma in material terms. **"Save bodies not souls."**
- Promote community apart from the Spirit of Christ. **"Ethics is an economic & individual rights issue."**
- See the poor as (primarily) victims of the greedy rich and a capitalistic system that takes unfair advantage of them. **"The poor need a hand and a handout."**
- Look down their nose at the political right. **"Conservatives are selfish, materialistic, intolerant, and evil."**

38

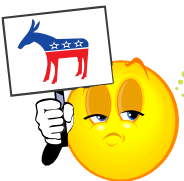
The religious **right** is tempted to:



- Make uncritical nationalism a sacred calling. **"America is always right."**
- Define God's blessing in terms of the American dream. **Kingdom values get confused with personal material blessing.**
- Confront select personal moral sins only. **"God will bless us if we repent of abortion, sexual immorality, & socialism."**
- See the poor as (primarily) lazy and irresponsible who could change their state if they would only work harder, and smarter. **"The poor only need opportunity."**
- Demonize the left. **"Political liberals are always naive and usually (always) power hungry, wrong, and probably not Christians."**

39

Both sides share some things in **common**:



- They are preoccupied with the temporal / material. **"It's all about this life and now."**
- They are convinced that the solutions are political. **"It's all about social systems."**



- They associate their politics with their theology. **"God is on our side."**
- They are more committed to being "understood by" rather than "understanding" each other. **"We don't need or care to hear about your ideas."**
- They question the motives of those on the other side. **"We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives, and realistic solutions."**

40

"Democracy gives us the right to disagree and is designed to use the energy of creative conflict to drive positive social change. Partisanship is not a problem. Demonizing the other side is."

Parker Palmer



41

Mistake #3

Reducing Christianity to personal ethics and public politics

The challenge for Christians is not that we fail to reform American culture or the systems of a fallen world

But that we accept Satan's challenge to gain the whole world by any means.
(Matt.4:8-10).



42

Mistake #3

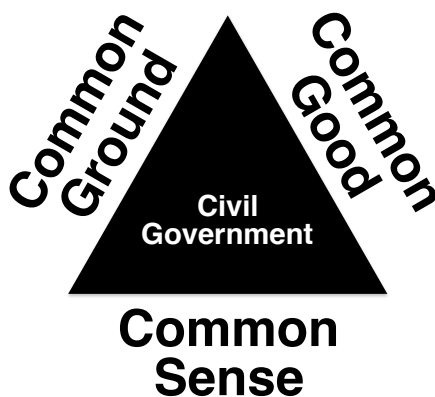
Reducing Christianity to personal ethics and public politics

The Ten Commandments were not given to reform the world but to break its heart.



43

Civil Christian Conduct



44

Civil Christian Conduct

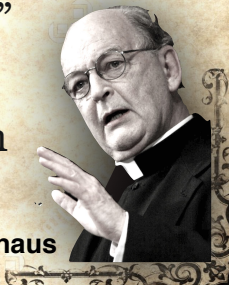
- **Fear not.** Remember where your **hope** is and what the **Scripture** says and does not say about human government.
- Be **civil and respectful** in public debate.
- Seek a wise **balance** between individual liberty and the common good or "general welfare".
- Respect the fact that the **distinct social moral demands** on the church are narrower than those on the state.
- Base your political arguments on the **common ground, sense, & good** of the general public.

45

"The religious left wants the kingdom on earth without its king and before its time."

The religious right wants the kingdom without the cross.

Richard John Neuhaus



46

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; **not as the world gives, do I give to you.** Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

My ways are not your ways.

Fear not !

47