

GOD AND POLITICS

Handout for Lesson 22 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. What role, if any, should the church play in politics?
2. What role, if any, should individual Christians play in politics?

“When religious leaders enter into electoral politics, it is more likely that religion will be debased than that politics will be elevated.”

“Did Jesus ever suggest by word or by example that we should aspire to acquire, let alone take over, the power of Caesar? Did Jesus spend any time and energy trying to improve, let alone dominate, the reigning government of his day? Did he ever work to pass laws against the sinners he ministered to? Did he worry at all about ensuring that his rights and the rights of his followers were protected? Does any New Testament author remotely hint that engaging in this sort of activity has anything to do with the kingdom of God?”

3. Is God a Democrat or a Republican?

Joshua 5:13-14 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

4. Is democracy God’s favorite political system?
5. Is America a Christian nation?

Psalms 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.

Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Psalms 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Ronald Reagan (1984): “We establish no religion in this country, nor will we ever. We command no worship. We mandate no belief. But we poison our society when we remove its theological underpinnings. ... Without God, there is no virtue, because there’s no prompting of the conscience. Without God, we’re mired in the material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceive. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society. And without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”

POLITICS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

#1) We must be respectful of our political leaders.

☞ Romans 13:1-4

☞ 1 Peter 2:17

☞ 1 Timothy 2:1-3

☞ Revelation 6:10

#2) We must obey our political leaders ...up to a point.

☞ Titus 3:1

☞ Matthew 22:17-22

☞ Acts 5:29

#3) We must be suspicious of government.

☞ Luke 4:5-7

☞ 1 John 5:19

☞ John 12:31

☞ John 14:30

☞ John 16:11

☞ 2 Corinthians 4:4

☞ Ephesians 2:2

☞ Revelation 12:9

#4) We must use the political system to do the work of God ... not vice versa.

#5) The church must never become divided along man-made political lines.

#6) We must stay within the political process and not take the law into our own hands.

☞ Romans 12:19

☞ Matthew 26:51

#7) We must rejoice when the government persecutes us.

☞ Matthew 5:10-12

☞ Luke 6:22-23

☞ 1 Peter 4:13

☞ John 15:18-20

#8) We must be fearful when the government embraces us.

“It is therefore all the more tragic that Christians should, in the moment of victory, forsake the revelation in Jesus, for its opposite in Constantine. The church did not need the protection of Constantine; it had already taken on the Empire,

century after century, and had in the end been victorious. ... If Constantine had in turn persecuted the church, he too would have failed to conquer it. How was it then that he was able to succeed where his predecessors had failed? How was it that by a little kindness, a word of praise here, a grant to build a new church there, he was able to induce the church to forsake what they could not be made to forsake under threat of torture or death? ... And once again the Son of Man was betrayed with a kiss. Not that the betrayal took place in a moment. It was a gradual process. Gradually the church came to have faith in the Emperor, to trust him and to see in him and in his ways the hand of God.”

#9) We must be involved in politics, but we must not trust in politics.

☞ Acts 17:6

☞ John 17:16

☞ Luke 22:25-27

#10) We must not turn our ideology into our idolatry.

☞ Romans 1:16

☞ 1 Corinthians 1:18

“If one may judge by the various commencement utterances ... Americans have only one religion: devotion to democracy. They extol its virtues, are apprehensive about the perils to which it is exposed, pour maledictions upon its foes, rededicate themselves periodically to its purposes, and claim unconditional validity for its ideals.”

C. S. Lewis (Screwtape Letters): “Let him begin by treating the Patriotism as part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the state at which religion becomes merely a part of the “cause,” in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce. ... Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing.”

C. S. Lewis: “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. ... It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in.’ Aim at earth and you will get neither.”