

Lesson 22

God and Politics

I. Introduction

A. Religion plays a central role in modern politics. If you don't believe it, just listen to the politicians.

1. Bill Clinton ran for president in 1992 on what he called a "New Covenant" platform. In the reelection year of 1996, Clinton spoke about Christ in nine different statements.
2. George Bush has referred to America as the "light of the world" that the "darkness" (our national enemies) cannot extinguish. During the campaign, he said that Jesus was his "favorite political philosopher." During his State of the Union address, he said "there's power, wonder working power" in the American people.
3. Politicians in both parties campaign in churches and actively court the so-called religious vote.

B. Our question today is not whether politicians should be involved in religion (as if we could stop them) , but rather whether religion should be involved in politics.

1. What role, if any, should the church play in politics?
 - a) Some religious groups, for example, regularly turn their pulpits over to candidates.
 - b) They have July 4th celebrations as part of their worship in which they freely mix the cross and the flag.
2. What role, if any, should individual Christians play in politics?
 - a) Should we vote? Should we campaign? What attitude should we have toward the political system?
 - b) Historically, the Lord's church has not been actively involved in the political process.
 - (1) Is that the correct approach or should we be following the denominational approach? (I hope you know the answer to that question!)

(2) Or perhaps we should heed the warning: "When religious leaders enter into electoral politics, it is more likely that religion will be debased than that politics will be elevated."

C. As with our other questions in this series, we need to turn to the Bible for answers.

1. In the first century, Christians were part of a religious minority, lacking worldly power or political influence --- and yet they turned the world upside down!
2. The unchallenged assumption today among many in the religious world is that all will be well if we can just get the right person into office --- and yet where do we find that hope in the Bible?
3. "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?"

II. Let's begin by considering a question that is often asked -- is God a Democrat or a Republican?

A. Article 6 of the Constitution says that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States. "

1. But that does not mean that we cannot apply a religious test to determine how we are to vote. In fact, we should apply a religious test to determine how we do everything that we do.
2. Col. 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
3. But how should we vote? Does God have a preference for one party over another? To some, the answer is most definitely yes! But let's look for a moment at those two options.

B. Is God a Democrat?

1. In a recent presidential debate, at Dartmouth, Bill Richardson (Democratic candidate for president) said that, as president, he would refuse the honorary chairmanship of the Boy Scouts. Why? Well, the Boy Scouts does not allow homosexual scoutmasters to take Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts on camping trips.
 2. All the Democratic front-runners favored second-graders being read stories in school about a homosexual marriage between a pair of princes. This would result in the absurdity of 6-year-olds, forbidden by the U. S. Supreme Court from learning about God, Adam and Eve in school, being introduced to sexual unions between Adam and Steve.
- C. Is God a Republican?
1. Rudy Giuliani?
 - a) Rudy is not only pro-choice on abortion, but he has championed gay rights and marched in gay pride parades – once not all that far behind the big float of the North American Man/Boy Love Association. He is thrice married, and he used to bring his mistress into Gracie Mansion while still married to the mother of his son. When she threw him out, he was taken in by a couple of gay friends.
 2. Mitt Romney?
 - a) Romney is a Mormon. According to Mormonism (which we studied in Lesson 6) , God is a man who consists of flesh and bones. Jehovah is Adam who came to earth with Eve who was one of his wives. When they came to earth they were immortal. In order to become mortal it was necessary for them to sin. Once mortal they could beget sons and daughters. They say that Christ, being pre-existent, is eternal, but they also say that every man can become God in the same manner that Christ became God. Christ was nothing and became nothing that every man has not been and cannot become.
 3. So what is the answer? Republican or Democrat?
 - a) The question reminds me of an event in the life of Joshua.

(1) Joshua 5:13 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? 14 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?

b) Instead of asking whether God is on our side or someone else's side, we need to ask "What saith my lord unto his servant?"

(1) Abraham Lincoln once listened as a preacher said that he hoped the Lord was on our side. Lincoln responded, "I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that this nation should be on the Lord's side. " That should be our prayer.

(2) The question is not which party God is affiliated with, but rather which party affiliates itself with God -- and in today's world the answer may very well be that none of them do. In our modern society, faithfulness to Christ may very well make one unelectable in a national election.

D. But that discussion leads us to an even broader issue -- Is democracy God's favorite political system?

1. Everyone knows that Athens is the birthplace of democracy.

a) That birth occurred around 500 BC, and it lasted for about 100 years. 100 years after that, Alexander was dead and his empire fragmented. Fast forward another 100 years, and Greece was at war with Rome, and we all know how that story ended.

b) In fact, Daniel told us in 600 BC how it ended, 100 years before democracy was born in Athens!

c) It is interesting that as Daniel tells us what would happen with the kingdoms of the world in the 600 years between his day and the first century, he skips right over the birth of democracy.

2. I think a good argument could be made that if God has a favorite political system, it is a monarchy rather than a democracy.
 - a) Israel was a monarchy under God until they rejected him as king and sought an earthly ruler instead to reign over them.
 - b) The church (God's eternal kingdom) is a monarchy as well.
 - (1) But as with Israel, people today have rejected Christ as king and have replaced him with earthly rulers.
 - (2) Denominations today take votes to determine truth, as if such a thing could be done.
 - (3) Truth is not subject to the democratic process. Even a unanimous vote of men against God would not change the truth in the slightest.
 - (a) Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.
 - (4) Many modern-day denominations operate as democracies, but the church is not a democracy. Instead, the church is an authoritarian system. What we do is governed by the authority of God as found in his word. Christ is our king; he is the head of his church.
 3. Aside: Democracy is an advanced system of government, and if history and current events tell us anything it is that one size does not fit all when it comes to political systems.
 - a) Benjamin Franklin: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters."
- E. And finally one more preliminary issue -- Is America a Christian nation?
1. Alexis de Tocqueville said there was "no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America. "
 2. We speak of Christian nations, Christian music, Christian radio stations, Christian colleges, and on and on -- but the Bible speaks only of Christians.

- a) What we really mean when we ask whether the United States is a Christian nation is either (1) was America founded on principles from the Bible, or (2) does America follow principles found in the Bible?
- b) The answer to (1) is largely yes, and the answer to (2) is largely no.
3. The Bible has much to say about governments and how they are to be judged:
 - a) Psa. 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.
 - b) Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.
 - c) Psa. 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.
4. Where does America stand on that scale?
 - a) Much of the world associates America with Christianity -- and that is not good when the America they see is steeped in sin and self-indulgence.
5. I believe that an excellent case could be made for the proposition that America has played a big role in the providence of God as he cares for and nurtures his kingdom -- but I also believe a strong case can be made for the proposition that that providential plan has come to an end or is coming to an end.
 - a) America was once a very fertile field, but it seems much less so today. Where is the next fertile field?
6. 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."

III. Politics in the New Testament -- What Can We Learn?

A. Principle #1: We must be respectful of our political leaders.

1. Paul tells us in Romans 13:1–4 that government is ordained by God. In fact, Paul tells us that government is God's servant for our good.
 - a) When Paul wrote this, the government was very evil -- but even so, it maintained law and order and maintained peace, which allowed the gospel to spread all over the known world.
2. Peter tells us to honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2:17)
 - a) Did that command apply only to the good Roman emperors? If so, then which Roman emperors fell into that category? Of course, there were no good Roman emperors -- and yet Christians were commanded to honor them.
 - b) This command does not seem to be widely followed today.
 - (1) While it is true that politics today is vicious, it is not true that the viciousness is only a recent phenomenon.
 - (2) One New York newspaper, for example, regularly referred to Abraham Lincoln as "that hideous baboon at the other end of the avenue. " His hometown Illinois newspaper said that he was worse than the greatest butchers of antiquity.
 - (3) Belittling and denigrating our leaders has today become a national pastime, and particularly when the target is someone we did not vote for.
 - (4) But what did Peter command? He told us to honor the emperor -- and no one had voted for the emperor of Peter's day!
 - (5) Why is it important that we not dishonor our leaders? Because when we rebel against their authority (which Romans 13 tells us is God given), we ultimately rebel against all authority.
3. We must pray for our political leaders. . . but we can pray for deliverance from them.
 - a) (1 Timothy 2:1–3) I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in

authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

b) (Revelation 6:10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

B. Principle #2: We must obey our political leaders ... up to a point.

1. (Titus 3:1) Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.

2. We must support the political system by paying taxes.

a) But those taxes are used for some evil purpose such as, for example, to fund abortions. And that wasn't true in the first century?

b) (Matthew 22:17-22) Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. 22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

c) Aside: Jesus' question in verse 20 must have struck them to the core -- whose image is this? The Jews saw that image as a direct violation of God's command against making graven images -- and yet they were fighting to keep it.

3. Romans 13 also tells us that there is no authority except from God.

a) From that, we know that the government's authority over us is not unbounded. When it oversteps the will of God, we can know that the government has gone outside its mandate from God.

b) At that point, another principle comes into operation -- "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

C. Principle #3: We must be suspicious of government.

1. In Luke 4:5–7, Satan tempted Christ by offering him all the kingdoms of the world because, he said, "it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please."
 - a) Jesus, of course, refused Satan's offer -- but he did not dispute Satan's claim of ownership.
2. Satan's relation to world government is discussed elsewhere in the Bible.
 - a) 1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (NKJV)
 - b) John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.
 - c) John 14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.
 - d) John 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.
 - e) 2 Cor. 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
 - f) Eph. 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.
 - g) Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
3. These verses tell us that Satan is involved in world politics and world governments, and that he uses them in his attempts to thwart the plans of God.
 - a) Does this surprise us? In the twentieth century alone, 200 million people died as a result of war and political conflict.

- b) No matter how good a particular government may be by the world's standards, the Bible tells us that that government is under attack by Satan, and that Satan is seeking to influence it for his own evil purposes.
- (1) Thus, the church must never place its trust in any political system or worldly government.
 - (2) Nor should we be shocked when a political system or worldly government acts contrary to the will of God. The Roman leaders of Jesus' day were grossly immoral -- but you never find any surprise over that fact in the New Testament.
- c) Some think a Christian should not be involved in politics at all -- but that approach would require us to retreat from battle, and as a Christian we must never do that. We must be the salt of the earth, and that requires action in the world on our part.
- (1) As Paul warned us in 2 Corinthians 2:11, we must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.
 - (2) If Satan is involved in fighting God with political systems and governments, then we must be there as well standing on God's side. If we do not, then who will?
 - (3) But, of course, our weapons are not carnal.
 - (a) (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.
 - (b) (Ephesians 6:13-17) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts

of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(c) Our political fights must be waged with the word of God in our hands, and our involvement with politics must be in accord with what we find in that book.

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

1. We must not look to the government to carry out the work that God has given us to do.

2. But the government can be a useful tool in helping us with our mission.

a) Paul, for example, was able to use the political system to his advantage in proclaiming the gospel. Several times he used his Roman citizenship to his advantage in proclaiming the gospel.

b) In fact, as evil as it was, the Roman empire was part of God's plan in establishing his kingdom. Daniel described first century Rome 600 years before the fact, and it was during that kingdom that God's eternal kingdom was established.

c) The Roman peace of that day allowed the gospel to be proclaimed far and wide throughout the known world.

E. Principle #5: The church must never become divided along man-made political lines.

1. In the first century, there was constant political and cultural friction between the ruling Romans and their Jewish subjects.

2. The Jews of that day were divided over how to respond.

a) At one extreme were the zealots who believed that the Jews should take up arms against the Romans, start a war, and trust God to intervene and give them victory.

b) At the other extreme were those who thought it best not to trouble the Romans, but rather to cooperate with them as much as possible.

3. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot were at opposite ends of this spectrum -- and yet both were apostles of Christ.

- a) One commentator said that the gulf between Ralph Nader and Rush Limbaugh would not even come close to the gulf between Matthew and Simon.
 - b) In fact, historians tell us that zealots sometimes assassinated tax collectors!
 - c) And yet, Matthew and Simon spent three years together working side by side with Jesus.
4. Just as interesting, we never find a word in the gospels about their different political positions.
- a) Indeed, we never read any direct word about what Jesus thought of their vastly different political positions.
 - b) Instead, what we find is that Matthew and Simon had something in common that dwarfed their individual political differences -- even as extreme as those differences were.
5. Is this what we find in the church today? Or do we instead find divisions along political lines?
- a) Do we find an attitude that to be a good Christian you must belong to a certain political party, and that no one who supports some other political party could be a good Christian?
 - b) Certainly, a Christian must never support evil -- but there is no political party on earth that is free of all evil.
 - c) I, probably like many of you, believe that some political parties are more closely aligned with the Biblical ideal, but there is room for improvement in every party. And perhaps some may be working in other parties for the purpose of bringing them closer in alignment.
 - d) In any event, we should remember the example of Matthew and Simon. Jesus chose them for a reason -- and it was not because he wanted peace at the dinner table! And yet Matthew and Simon worked together for Christ despite whatever political differences they had.
 - e) The question for us is not how we should vote but rather how we should live. And when we focus on temporary political issues, we should remember what Peter wrote:

- (1) (2 Peter 3:11–12) Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

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

1. Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Romans 12:19)

2. At times, the Roman empire persecuted Christians ruthlessly.

- a) The persecution of the church by Rome was particularly intense during the reigns of Nero and Domitian. In A. D. 66 a fire destroyed much of Rome. A rumor spread that Nero had set the fire to further his plans to rebuild the city. To dispel the rumor Nero blamed the Christians who, as was well known, predicted a fiery end of the world. Tacitus describes the situation as follows:

- (1) To scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his circus, mixing with the crowds in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the

impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.

- b) As bad as that was, there is no point in Scripture where Christians were told to fight back against the government. I am not saying that it would have necessarily been wrong to defend yourself in such a situation, but there is no such example in Scripture. Instead, we find saints dying as martyrs with the name of Christ on their lips.
- c) If there was any point in history where one might have expected to see some sort of Christian guerrilla force it would have been then -- and yet we find nothing of the sort.
- d) Instead, the one point at which an uprising might have occurred, Jesus put an immediate stop to it.
 - (1) Matthew 26:51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

G. Principle #7: We must rejoice when the government persecutes us.

1. The Bible is very clear on this point:

- a) Matthew 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
- b) Luke 6:22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

c) 1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

2. Why should we rejoice when persecuted? Because each persecution is an opportunity -- and opportunity to stand up and let the world know that we are on the Lord's side, and that we will remain on his side no matter what may come. We should pray for such opportunities.

a) Certainly we should be thankful to God that we are not facing the persecution that some first century Christians endured, but we should also thank God for the persecutions that we do face. Why? Because when we are persecuted by an evil world it tells us that we are doing something right.

b) John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

H. Principle #8: We must be fearful when the government embraces us.

1. The government wants to control whatever it touches, and the church is no exception. The day will come when the government will try to tell us what we can and cannot say from the pulpit. It has already happened in other countries, and we are on the same road.

2. We should much prefer government indifference to a government embrace -- although many denominations appear to be seeking an embrace.

3. Rome again is the perfect example of why we should be fearful when the government embraces us.

a) Much is made in history books about the Roman emperor Constantine's supposed conversion to Christianity in AD 312 -- and yet who changed after that conversion? Constantine

or the church? What was converted to whom? Perhaps you should ask a "Roman" Catholic.

b) Kee: "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? The Emperor offered so much, beyond the dreams of Christians recently under constant threat. He offered in effect at least a share in the kingdoms of the world. When Satan is seen to offer such rewards, the temptation is rejected. When one comes professing to be a follower of the One God, then his offer is accepted. ... 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."

I. Principle #9: We must be involved in politics, but we must not trust in politics.

1. Acts 17:6 tells us that the early disciples turned the world upside down -- and they did so without a voting block in the Roman senate.

2. John 17:16 tells us that we are in the world, but we are not of the world.

a) The kingdom of Christ is very different from the kingdoms of this world -- the power structure is entirely different.

(1) Luke 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at

meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat?
but I am among you as he that serveth.

- b) There is only one eternal kingdom, and it is not a man-made kingdom.
 - (1) In the Old Testament, religion and politics were intertwined, but that is not what we see when we read the New Testament. The earthly kingdom of the Old Testament has been replaced by a spiritual kingdom in the New.
 - (2) Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36)
 - (3) We must always work to preserve the radical uniqueness of God's kingdom in contrast to all of the kingdoms of the world.
 - (4) Augustine (after being told that Rome had been looted by the barbarians): "Whatever men build, men will destroy. "
- 3. And yet as good citizens we should participate, and indeed, unless we are willing to let Satan operate unchallenged, we must participate. We discussed this topic in more detail in Lesson 19.
 - a) But the day may come (and it may be soon) where we are called upon to choose between Nero and Caligula. At that point, we should continue to pray and trust in God -- just as the Saints did in the days of the actual Nero and the actual Caligula.

J. Principle #10: We must not turn our ideology into our idolatry.

- 1. Reinhold Niebuhr: "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."
- 2. 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."

3. George Bush has referred to America as the "light of the world" that the "darkness" (our national enemies) cannot extinguish.
4. If we leave here today with only one message, let it be this: America is not the light of the world, and democracy is not the hope of all mankind.
 - a) (John 8:12) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
 - b) (Romans 1:16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
 - c) (1 Cor. 1:18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.
 - d) Politics is not the power of God unto salvation. We are never going to reach the world with the gospel through politics.
5. In the Bible it is very clear that it is not through the great power brokers of human history that God works to bring about his purposes, but rather through those who to the world seem insignificant.
6. Like Israel of old, we in the church must trust in God rather than on human alliances and human power.
 - a) Ancient Israel often displayed their lack of faithfulness and trust in God by instead relying on their own human alliances with Egypt and other surrounding countries. They trusted in the arm of man rather than the arm of God, and they focused on worldly matters rather than spiritual matters.
7. 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."