

“God and Church & State”

Matthew 22:15-22

Introduction

Thomas Jefferson famously articulated the concept of "separation of church and state" when discussing the first amendment right to freedom of religion in America. Many believed this means there should be a separation of God from government, but a Kingdom Voter knows this cannot be true since government is God's covenantal institution and political leaders are His ministers. Like a levy holding back a flood, the church was meant to be the protective mechanism God created to safeguard society through its influence on government. However, when the church fails to do what it was designed to do, the levee breaks, unleashing a destructive flood in the form of confusion and chaos within the church and culture.

So, what are Kingdom-minded people to do to help restore the protective mechanism God provided through the body of Christ? In Matthew 22:15-22, the Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus with a trick question and create a false dichotomy when they asked whether Jesus thought it necessary to pay taxes to the Roman government. Jesus quickly shut down their malice or evil intentions by telling them to look at the coins in their pockets and tell Him whose face was on the money. When the Pharisees responded that it was Caesar's likeness, Jesus simply said, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." Jesus' response implied, pay your taxes and include God in the conversation even when God is not invited by others. In other words, a Kingdom-minded person doesn't separate God from government, but unapologetically brings God into every decision concerning all matters, even governmental ones. A Kingdom Voter passes every question concerning rules and society through the filter of Scripture and God's policies.

The issue we are facing as a generation is that many Christians have found themselves tossed by the winds of agendas and political alignments. Rather than maintaining independence from political parties, Christ-professing believers often have surrendered their influence and power as a protective levee for culture in exchange for political purposes. Many believers have failed to take the time to truly know God's Word and His will for us as ambassadors in culture. Rather than be salt and light as a source of healing and direction, many disciples of Jesus wield swords of division, declaring a political party's opinions rather than the truth of the Lord.

Kingdom Voters take the time to know the Word of God so deeply that they can be beacons of truth and healing balms in a world swirling in confusion and pain. Kingdom Voters know the purposes of God so intently that they can boldly proclaim His righteous ways and influence the systems and institutions of this world. Ultimately, Kingdom Voters declare their independence from the man-made political agendas and declare their dependence on God alone.

Getting Started

1. What do you think of when you hear the phrase, "separation of church and state?"
2. In what ways have you seen God separated from government? What have been some of the effects of that on our culture?

Let's Get Personal

1. What are some important issues about which you feel unsure of God's stance? What are your thoughts about how best to influence government (politics and agendas) instead of being influenced by government?
 2. How has the church's failure to be the protective mechanism for our culture brought us to the current situation in which we find ourselves as a nation?
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3. What are some ways in which you have chosen to align more closely with an earthly kingdom instead of a heavenly one? In what ways have you chosen to stick close to party lines instead of godly ones?

Take the Next Step

1. What are some steps you can take to bring God into the conversations concerning our government? What are some ways you can be an ambassador for God when it comes to government?
2. How can you bring life to your community? Make a plan to do something to bring life to your community this week.
3. What are some specific areas of God's Word you may need to study more deeply? Who or what resources could help you find answers to the questions you may have?
4. In what ways do you think our nation needs specific prayers about restoring God in our government? Take some time right now and pray with your group.
5. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: James 4:12; Psalm 22:28; 103:9; Daniel 4:25; 1 Samuel 8:10-18; John 19:9-11; Ezekiel 43:6-9; 2 Chronicles 15:3-6; Ephesians 1:21-23; 3:10; 1 Timothy 2:2; and Matthew 16:18-19.

Renew Your Mind

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

Matthew 5:13
