Understanding the Times

3/7/07

**Toward a Christian Perspective on Law and Politics**

*Questions:*

#1 What does God think about these issues? What is His will? To think about the Christian view of anything, we have to begin with these questions.

#2 What is God’s will for human society? People living in harmony under the direction of God

#3 Does God expect Law to accomplish this? Impossible. The OT shows the futility of this. Governments could develop the technology to monitor every person’s every single action and develop the means to keep that person from doing anything they wanted to stop, and yet society still would not honor God. Law is totally inadequate in making people righteous or making them live totally right. The NT is adamant that law w/o grace is inadequate. Calvin’s Geneva is another example. God does not see conventional law and politics as the way to accomplish the central part of His will. Jesus Christ came and inaugurated the Kingdom of God for that.

#4 What can and cannot Law do? The law can bring some stability and order to a society. This is a status much preferable to chaos and anarchy. Law is like duck tape wrapped around a leaking hose. It is a temporary, halfway solution, that is better than nothing.

#5 What is the basis of good Law? The only basis for right and wrong is God’s character. Law has to line up with that in order to be any good at all.

#6 Where does the government get its power? What does and does not this mean?

The power comes from God. It has potential for good. On the other hand, the power has the potential to be twisted and perverted and used for evil purposes. (Just like demons.)

#7 What do these verses say about exousia? (These verses show the tension found in the NT on the issue of government and its powers—powers are created by God, powers can oppose Christ and the church, powers are not just government but are tied in with government, etc.)

-Romans 13.1 Powers refer to governments

-Col. 1.16 Powers created by God

-Col. 2.15 Christ opposed the powers

-I Cor. 15.24 Christ smashing the powers

-Eph. 6.12 Church against the powers

-Eph. 1.20-21 Christ set over the powers

-Eph. 3.9-10 Church is to show the powers God’s wise plan

#8 What is God’s permanent plan for Law and Politics? God’s kingdom. Here is the possibility of a group of people living out God’s will. Here, God’s law is submitted to voluntarily. Here, societal structures can develop through mutual servanthood instead of coercive force. This is the only truly Christian system of law and politics. Any other half-way, compromising system cannot said to truly be Christian (a system cannot be Christian if it is not “like Christ”). Therefore, while the many systems available (democracy, kingdom, communism, dictatorship) may be effective to various degrees, one cannot be singled out above the rest as the Christian view.

#9 Are there areas that the government speaks to that Jesus doesn’t?

yes, for example, speed limits, building codes, food laws