

GOD AND GOVERNMENT:  
SHOULD A CHRISTIAN GO TO WAR?  
March 10, 2002

INTRO: In our last message on God and government we covered first from Adam to Noah. That is from 4000 BC to 2300 BC. Then we covered from Noah to Moses. I trust you read the account of Abraham taking armed servants and fighting to deliver Lot out of the hands of four kings. I was not sure if I could get that all on one tape. From Noah to Moses took us from 2300 BC to 1450 BC. Now you understand I am giving you round figures. I am use Frank R. Klassen's book, *The Chronology of The Bible* for the dates I give you.

So, of the first 4000 years of man's history, we have 1450 years to go. However, it stands to reason that since mankind is ever increasing in number, that we will have more complicated government developing.

I want to encourage note-taking again. I was privileded to sit as judge recently for the local 4H club where they club members had to give speeches. I realize now how capable you young people are. My outlines may be more detailed than you are used to but you easily have the capabilities to understand them. Young people, if the Lord does not return first and you get to be 80 years old, these messages will never become obselete. And if you should go to Bible school and you should exceed my understanding in these matters, I will be grateful to no end and you will appreciate then, much more than you can now, what you are getting. Here is my advice to you: Take notes and store them somewhere.

Let me remind you again, that the aim of these messages is to answer such questions as: Should a Christian go to war? Or, What is a Christian's responsibility to human government? Should I swear in a court of law? May I use the law to sue my fellow Christian?

We begin today's message by looking at God and government from the Exodus to the monarchy. From Moses to King Saul. From 1450 to 1025 BC.

3. From the Exodus to the monarchy
  - a. Secular government
    - 1) The transition to the judges

You will remember the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And you will remember that Jacob had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. And you will no doubt remember how that Jacob's 11 sons sold Joseph into slavery and brought his coat of many colors to Jacob who concluded that an evil beast had taken him. And you will remember how Joseph became president of Egypt. We see in Egypt a highly developed form of government. But among the Jews we still have the rule of the fathers.

However, during Israel's 400 years in Egypt they grew into a massive group of people, well over one million. At this time, patriarchal rule came to an end and one man became ruler of an entire nation of people. This brings us to a time we might call the time of the judges.

Maybe the most concise account of these two time periods is given by Stephen in Acts 7. He is defending himself before the Jewish people and begins with the first man in Jewish History, Abraham (Read Acts 7:1-16). That is a brief history from the flood to the exodus. We call it the time of the patriarchs.

Then Stephen gives a history from the Exodus to the monarchy (Read Acts 7:17-35). You see, in 7:35 we read that God made Moses a ruler and a deliverer. Here we take a huge leap in human government. It is not the father leading a family or tribe; it is one man becoming leader of over a million people!

## 2) The office of the judge

The judge was another significant development in government. Acts 7:35 informs us that Moses became a ruler and a judge over the people. We see here a giant step in the development of government. At

first we had a father over a family. Then a father over a tribe. And now we have a judge or a ruler over all the families and tribes of Israel. Well, Moses became the first judge of the time of the judges which lasts until the first king of Israel. Let me add for your benefit that some do not classify Moses, Eli and Samuel as judges. But I think it best to view them as judges even though they were prophets as well.

It is important here to note that government was still in the process of change. However, it seems that this new system of government in secular matters is not successful. The lack of success though, seems to be due to the disobedience of the people, not the system of government. This is indicated to us in Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:25 and it reads like this: Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

### 3) The office of prophet

A prophet was a spokesman for God. So God would directly communicate with the prophet and the prophet would pass the message on to whomever God wanted to address.

The prophet was not directly involved in governing the people. Only when the prophet was also a judge did he have direct involvement in governing the people. Moses was both a judge and a prophet (Acts 7:36-37).

Later in the times of the kings we will find God sending prophets to the kings time and again. It usually happened when the king went astray. You will remember when King David sinned that God spoke to Nathan the prophet and Nathan in turn, brought the message of God to David. And

so God often used the office of the prophet to correct the leaders of secular government.

#### 4) The office of lesser judges

During the Exodus another interesting addition in government took place. This is recorded in Exodus 18. Jot it down and read it later. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law observed how much time Moses had to spend to judge all the individual cases of over a million people. Listen to Jethro in (Exodus 18:17-23).

And so now we have God -> Moses -> Lesser judges -> Father -> Mother -> Children. Now, instead of a father over a family we have a leader over a nation.

#### 5) The quality of the time of the judges

The quality of the time of the judges can be best described under seven cycles that go like this: Blessing; backsliding; bondage; brokenness. Example: Blessing Judges 3:30. Backsliding 4:1. Bondage 4:2. Brokenness 4:3.

It was also a time marked by much disobedience on the part of Israel. Turn with me first to see what God expected of Israel once they entered the land of Canaan, the land into which Joshua brought them (Num. 33:50-56). Now turn with me to the book of the Judges and let us see what happened (Jud. 1:21a; 27a; 29a; 30a; 31a; 33a).

#### 6) The written law

From the time of Moses onward, yet another very huge change took place. When Moses died he left five of the most ancient books, and five of the most powerful books of the Bible to help judge the people. These five books have made an inestimable

impact on all governments including the British and thus American and Canadian governments. Take away those five books and all of history would have been entirely different!

These books are known as the Torah. They are foundational books. Look at Joshua 1:8. We need to consider at least one area in these books. Turn to Exodus 20:13. It is the sixth of the ten commandments and says, "Thou shalt not kill." It is taken by some that this is a blanket statement that all killing of man by man is wrong. Right at this point this question is appropriate: Is all killing of man by man wrong?

It is my view that man must sometimes kill man and that not all killing of man by man is wrong. How this affects the New Testament believer we will see later. But let me show here why I believe that not all killing of man by man is wrong. First, we have seen that God has commanded that if man sheds man's blood, that is murder, then man shall shed the murderer's blood (Gen. 9:5-6). Surely God would not require that if it was wrong to do so. So the putting to death of a murderer is not murder, nor is it wrong, it is justice served by government.

Second, in Genesis 14 we have the first recorded war in the Bible (Read Gen. 14:14-16). In verse 14 we find Abraham take his 318 armed soldiers to deliver Lot. No doubt they were not just armed for show. I believe that killing in war is not viewed as murder and does not come under the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." When Cain killed Abel God showed divine disapproval. But when Abraham defeated the four kings, rather than divine disapproval, we have divine approval (Read Gen. 14:18-20).

In Exodus 17:8-16 we have Israel's first recorded war (8-16). And it is evident that Israel's victory was due to the help of God. If killing in war was murder, then God helped in murder (See also such passages as Numbers 21:33-35). So we can conclude that the Scriptures distinguish between murder and killing in war. (I am not saying that all killing in war is OK.)

The Scriptures further distinguish between manslaughter and murder. When Israel entered the land of Canaan they were to build three cities of refuge on either side of the Jordan River. These cities were for the express purpose of being a refuge for someone who killed another by accident (Num. 35:9-12). But if it was judged that this person had killed on purpose then he was a murderer and he was to be put to death (Num. 35:16->). A designated person called the avenger of blood was to put him to death (Num. 35:19). You may wish to study this chapter in detail.

I cannot agree with those who hold that all killing is equal to murder. I cannot agree with those who hold that every time Israel was involved in war in the OT they did wrong. It falls to secular government from time to time that they must kill, but this is not the same as murder.

CONCL: Well, what have we seen thus far? We have seen that at creation God placed man in position of government over creation. We have seen that the man was to be the ruler in the home. That took us from creation to the flood, some 1700 years later. During the time from the flood to the Exodus we see man as set up over man in secular matters while the spiritual remains largely unchanged.

This morning we have looked at secular government from the Exodus to the monarchy. Here we have seen monumental changes. We now have one man in charge of over a million people. Under this man we have lesser judges to take care

of smaller matters. We have also seen that there are times when man must kill man. Not all killing is equal to murder.

Let me draw one personal application from this message. Like Israel was to drive out all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, so we are to drive out all areas of wrong in our lives. And if like Israel, we fail to deal with sin in our lives, we will find that those failures will come back to haunt us. The people that Israel did not drive out came back to defeat them on numerous occasions. As it is essential that some people must be killed, so it is essential that all wrong in our lives be defeated. That is a clear lesson in Scripture over and over again. Later we will learn of Saul. He was to destroy all the Amkelekites. He left one Amelekite alive and one Amelekite ended up killing Saul. Let us deal thouroughly with sin.