

The Bible from Genesis onward speaks about the nations. Genesis 10:32, 12:2

Word 'nations' used 700+ times

There are several types of governance for nation states.

Theocracy - God rules. Israel was originally intended to be a model nation to the World 1 Samuel 12:12

Kritarchy - Judges

Monarchy - King Saul, David etc

Democracy/Representative democracy - People

Dictatorship or Particracy - One person dictatorship e.g. Kim Jong-un or one party rules the state e.g. China



States always have a small group of people who have power to set rules, punishments, and can force people to do things. It can do things that in another context would be immoral e.g. has power to take peoples money (taxes), 1 Samuel 8 :10-18. Take life (War, Capital punishment) Remove liberty (Prison, Lockdowns). Communities/society and States are different, we have choice to belong to a community, and but we live under a state's authority.

God and the nations

States are under the absolute authority of God Romans 13 :1, but have never been Godly or run on Christian principles e.g. Daniel 7, Godly people are never popular for too long in a state. Matthew 24 :9 Nations do have the responsibility to restrain evil, and maintain order Romans 13 :3 Even bad governments are better than no government, but governments are run by sinners (e.g. King Saul) reflecting the sinful people of the nation. God judges whole nations Isaiah 34 :1-2 , Jeremiah 18 :6-10 Satan can also deceive nations Revelation 20 :3

Questions

Has Britain or any other nation, ever been truly a Christian nation?



History of Christians and the state

- * First Christians lived under a state that was anti-Christian, suffered intense persecution.
- * Then the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the state religion.
- * The Roman Church became a dominant force within the European nations. Faith was often tied up with politics.
- * Erastianism based on ideas of Thomas Erastus 16th century theologian who believed the state to be superior to Church. So monarch can be the Head of the Church. Used in set up of the Church of England.
- * John Calvin was involved in setting up a theocratic state in Geneva, where Church superior to the state. However the state was very strict and opponents faced death e.g. Servetus. Adultery was also a capital crime.
- * Early puritan settlers in America (e.g. Roger Williams) sought a separation between Church and state. Early writers of US constitution aware of original sin, avoided giving too much power to the President.
- * Believers have had an impact on changing the character of a nation e.g. The Evangelical revival, when the nation was transformed e.g. Wilberforce, Fry. Also the Welsh revival, changed the community, plus the Hebridean revival.
- * Methodism was linked with training up working people into lay preachers etc, some later formed Trade Unions which later led to the Labour Party. "Labour owes more to Methodism than Marxism" - M Philips

Different Church / State models

1. The State has some control over the church This happened in England under Henry VIII. Today, the UK has two established churches, the Anglican Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In broad terms, "establishment" refers to a formal relationship between a church and the state. So the King has to be a 'Christian' and is the technical head of the church, with Government having a say over bishop appointments in the CofE.
2. The Church controls the State This happened during the Holy Roman Empire, the Pope had real political power.
3. The Church and State are separate There is no formal dealing with each other. At the Reformation, the Anabaptists argued that Christians should have nothing to do with the state, which included not voting, or fighting for the nation state. The Pilgrim Fathers in the US wanted separation after their experiences in England of the state interfering with peoples religious freedom.
4. The Church and State are in relationship with mutual recognition and respect. Martin Luther put forward the two kingdoms model. Each has a purpose under God, but those purposes must be achieved separately. Andrew Melville and King James 1 clashed over this.



How should a Christian relate to the state?

1. We should pray for the leaders and nation 1 Timothy 2 :1-3, Jeremiah 29 :7
2. We should submit to authorities Romans 13 :1-7, 1 Peter 2 :13-17 However there may be situations where obeying God comes first. Examples of civil disobedience in the Bible.
 - A) Midwives not killing male babies in Egypt. Exodus 1 :17
 - B) Daniel and friends not eating the Kings food. Daniel 1 :8-9
 - C) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to worship an idol Daniel 3 :16-18
 - D) Daniel refused to stop praying Daniel 6 :10+
 - E) Apostles refused to stop preaching Acts 5 :27-28
3. Pay your taxes Matthew 22 :21
4. Be righteous, to help the country. Proverbs 14 :34
5. Look out for Godly leaders (Choose Godly people if we can) 1 Samuel 12 :13-14
6. Recognise that a Christian lives under the state, but belongs to a different nation 1 Peter 2 :9-11
7. We must recognise that rulers and states are temporary Isaiah 40 :15
8. Live a quiet life 1 Thessalonians 4 :11
9. We are to be salt and light in our nation Matthew 5 :13-14
10. Encourage respect for Israel and Jerusalem Psalm 122 :6 Ezekiel 37 :21 Genesis 12 :2-3 Joel 3 :1-2



How does God want a country to be like?

1. Maintains law and order Romans 13 :3
2. Maintains moral standards Jude :7, Proverbs 14 :34, Nations where moral standards slide, tend to slide as a nation too.
3. Marriage and family life to be respected. Instituted from creation for mankind Genesis 2 :24. Children to be brought up well Proverbs 22 :6
4. Place of justice. Amos 8 :4-5 The poorest should not be abused, scales shouldn't be rigged.
5. Place where people can freely worship God.



Questions

Can we ask the state to prevent what the Bible teaches is immoral?
e.g. Abortion, Same sex marriage.

Debate—How far can we expect a secular nation to follow God's standards? Can you legislate for morality?

YouTube -The Theonomy Debate | Joel McDurmon vs. Jordan Hall

Theonomy (God law) Theonomists believe that God's civil law laid down in the OT by Moses still applies today. The civil code given to the Jews was good, perfectly just, and God given, so why not still use it? Other theologians say that the civil law was meant just for the state of Israel in a particular time.

One answer is understanding the difference between Moral law and Civil law and Ceremonial law The moral law that declares how man should live. The civil law that was the legal structures for the ancient nation of Israel. The ceremonial law that declared how ancient Israel was to worship. Moral law includes 10 Commandments, some of our nations laws based on it e.g. Murder, theft, but should we expect our nation to observe Sabbath for example? Should we expect non Christians to follow God's Moral Law? 1 Corinthians 5 :12-13. In India during the Empire burning widows with dead husbands was stopped because of Christian ideas.

Last points Christians can fairly have very different political views, on matters on how the country should be run. All the Parties have active Christians in them. They should do so, bringing respect to discussions, and being salt in the affairs of state. However, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are all members of the same party — monarchists who are waiting for their King to return (Revelation 19:11-16).

'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.' I Chronicles 7 :14

Questions

Any questions or thoughts?

Next time - Reading & studying the Bible