

SERMON (10-27-2024) – “Government God’s Way” (Romans 13:1-5)

Prologue

Good morning. Normally here at Lake Wylie Baptist Church, we study through a book of the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. This week and next week, we’ll be doing something a little different. We will be going through a short two-part series on politics and government. Today’s sermon is entitled “Government God’s Way”, and next week Pastor Jonathan’s sermon will be “The Healing of a Crippled Nation”.

I’ll be referencing a whole lot of different scriptures today. Don’t feel like you have to turn to each one. For those of you who like to take notes, I’d encourage you to maybe write down the references, and you can look them up later if you want to. In any case, we’ll be going through a lot of God’s Word, both Old and New Testament passages.

I will ask you to turn to our first passage, which will serve as the foundation for the remainder of the sermon today. If you have your Bibles, please turn to Romans chapter 13. We’ll be reading verses 1-7. If you didn’t bring a Bible today, you’ll find one in the rack underneath the chair in front of you. You’ll find our passage on page << >>. If you don’t have a Bible of your own, please take that Bible with you when you leave today, as our gift.

As you are able, please stand as we honor the reading of God’s Word.

Scripture

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (Romans 13:1-7)

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Opening prayer

Thank you, Lord God, for the honor and privilege of gathering together as a body of believers to worship you. Thank you for your Word, which instructs us, enlightens us, corrects us and molds us. As we open your Word now, we ask that your Holy Spirit would teach us what you would have for us to know this morning.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Preamble

What is government? What does it do, and maybe more importantly what SHOULD it do? Have you thought very much about the answer to that question? When most people hear the word “government” they think of civil government – federal, state or local governmental jurisdictions. I’ll bet if I asked 10 people at random to give me a description of what government is, and what its duties are, I would get 10 different responses.

At one extreme, some people look at government as a benevolent caregiver, and expect or rely on the civil authorities to provide for their safety, health, shelter, income and basic physical needs.

At the other extreme, you have those whose attitude about government is fear, or at least severe skepticism. These folks would say with along with Ronald Reagan, “The nine most terrifying words in the English language are “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.”

What’s the right perspective on government? What does God say about it? And how are we to interact with governmental agencies in a way that honors God?

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Introduction

According to scripture, all governmental authority comes from God. It is granted by God, and limited by Him, and all earthly governments are subject to His rule. The Bible repeatedly tells us to submit to these authorities “in the Lord”. We must obey the governmental authorities precisely because it is God who has defined them and put them in place.

But what if the government tries to enforce a law that is contrary to what God has spelled out in His Word? Here our choice is clear: we must always obey God, regardless of the outcome.

In Daniel chapter 3, we read how King Nebuchadnezzar commissioned the construction of a huge golden idol, and instructed all the people in the kingdom to bow down and worship when the orchestra played. Anyone who refused to worship the image would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

Because the king’s edict would require them to violate God’s law, 3 Hebrew men refused to obey. In Daniel 3:16-18 we read their response to Nebuchadnezzar:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18)

Despite the fact that they knew that the punishment for defying the king was the death penalty, the three young men chose to obey God.

God has given specific assignments to each government, and they may not reject those responsibilities without risking the legitimacy of their authority. Rebelling against the one who gives you your power is like sawing off the branch you are sitting on.

Specifically, there are four governments in the world that God established, and all of us are subject to each of these. These governments are:

- self-government;
- family government;
- church government;
- and civil government

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Let’s look at each of these.

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Self-Government

The first and foundational government is self-government. We see this in the first chapter of the Bible, in Genesis 1:28, where we read what is called the Dominion Mandate:

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
(Genesis 1:28)

Every human being is made in God’s image, and is called by God to exercise his or her personal authority: to rule their own bodies, minds, and hearts; to structure and live their own lives and choices in a way that is honoring and gives glory to God.

When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, godly self-government was lost. All people became slaves of sin and death. The image of God remains in all human beings, but it is distorted and broken. Godly self-governance has been twisted and warped, and replaced with the sin of selfishness and rebellion.

I think we can all agree that our governments and our society are in great need of revival. But so often we think that if we just vote the right person into office, then everything will be as it should be – as God intends it to be. But if reformation and revival are to occur in our world it must start at the foundational level: self-government. Society and culture can’t be reformed according to scripture until every human heart has been captured by the Holy Spirit, and come under the gracious dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. When this happens, the Spirit gives the fruit of self-control – which is self-government.

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Family Government

The second government established by God is the family. Like self-government, family government also was established in the Garden of Eden.

Then the man said,

***“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”***

***Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:23-24)***

The duty of family government is to be fruitful and multiply, as we read in the Dominion Mandate in Genesis 1:28.

A side note here. In the first book of the Bible we see God’s simple, beautiful definition of what a family is: husband, wife, and children. Because God established family government, he also defines what a family is. Different life situations and different circumstances (the loss of a spouse through death, separation, or divorce, for example), may not make the picture of a family perfectly symmetrical with God’s design. But God’s authority over family government makes the definition the correct one, and no one has a right to modify the definition to suit his own purposes. We must stand firm on what God has declared, and not give an inch when society tries to re-make the definition of marriage, family, even gender – to be something other than what God intended.

The responsibilities of the family government also include the overseeing of health, welfare and education of the family members.

The husband is the head of the family government, and as such is responsible before God for the provision and education of his entire household. We see this in Ephesians chapters 5 and 6:

***For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church,
his body, and is himself its Savior. (Ephesians 5:23)***

***Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the
discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)***

This responsibility also includes the duty of representation before God and the world.

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And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually. (Job 1:5)

Job prayed for his family – specifically his children – and dedicated them to God. Not just one time – continually. As head of the family, it is the father’s responsibility to pray for the spiritual well-being of all family members, and to do so on an ongoing basis. The husband is called by God to learn to say, like Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Back in Ephesians 5, Paul further details the duties of a husband. In verses 25-30 he writes:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^[a] ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body.

The words for “nourish” and “cherish” mean “feed” and “keep warm”. In other words, the husband is to provide for all the material needs of his wife: food, shelter, and safety.

Similarly, in 1 Timothy 5, Paul says:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

It’s a basic Christian duty for a man to defend his family, property, inheritance, and freedom.

Note that it is not the state’s job to provide health and welfare – not even for widows and orphans. It’s not even the church’s job. It is the family’s job to provide for those in need. And then, when there’s no family, the church is the backstop, but only under carefully monitored conditions.

Look at 1 Timothy 5:9-16:

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Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. (1 Timothy 5:9-16).

And generally, the goal of the church’s provision is to shepherd individuals back into families.

Much of what we have just talked about is based on the truth that in God’s design, the husband is the head of the household. But there will be family situations where, through no fault of her own, a woman finds herself having to raise a family by herself. In the absence of a husband, a woman may be the head of her own household. We see this in Numbers 27:1-7:

Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad ... And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, saying, ³ “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin. And he had no sons. ⁴ Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers.”

⁵ Moses brought their case before the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord said to Moses, ⁷ “The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them.

So in God’s family government, under certain circumstances a woman is permitted to act as family leader. But ordinarily, together, husband and wife, father and mother are the magistrates of the home. We see this in the fact that children are required by God to obey father and mother as equally authoritative.

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Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 5:16)

***My son, keep your father's commandment,
and forsake not your mother's teaching. (Proverbs 6:20)***

Speaking of teaching, scripture tells us that the task of education is uniquely given to the family.

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.^[a] ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

The command is given to fathers to bring children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This includes not only a thorough education in the Bible itself, but imparting an understanding of everything in the world – math, science, literature – through the lens of a biblical world view. God’s Word and a scriptural perspective applied to all areas of life should be the kind of education that every child receives. God requires parents to see to it that their children are being taught to love God with all their heart, soul and strength, all day long.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:7)

Christian parents must take the responsibilities demanded of the family government seriously, and that includes the education of the children. We may outsource some components of our children’s education to paid professionals, be they in public schools, private schools, Christian schools or home school co-ops. But we must not abdicate our responsibility to teach our children, leaving their eternal destiny in someone else’s hands.

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Church Government

Church government is the ministry of God’s Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The word “church” literally means “congregation” or “the called together”. The church consists of all those who have been called together for worship of the living God.

The reason a church government is necessary is because worship is potent, and even sometimes lethal. Worship is like a nuclear reactor that shouldn’t be treated frivolously or lightly.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized^[a] fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. (Leviticus 10:1-2)

let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

God established church government in order to receive fallen men and women into the assembly of saints, to teach them how to worship in spirit and in truth and live according to God’s Word, and – when necessary – to expel those from the assembly who persist in sin and refuse to repent. This is part of the duties of church discipline that the church government is responsible for.

It can be harder to see the church in the Old Testament, since for much of the Old Testament history, there was a great deal of overlap of family, congregation and nation, and sometimes leaders wore several different hats at the same time. But these different roles and jurisdictions were never entirely missing. We can see these distinctions when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, a priest of God, and later when God made Aaron a high priest, while Moses continued to lead the nation.

In the law, we see different kinds of regulations and penalties, some related to ceremonies and gathering for worship, and others more related to the nation of Israel and punishing crimes. Likewise, we see the separation between spheres in the different roles of Samuel (prophet and judge) and King Saul. From the beginning, God assigned a particular jurisdiction to those called to lead God’s people in worship.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus established the church in its fullest and clearest form:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

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In the Old Testament, sacrifices and rituals of the tabernacle and the temple were true invitations from God to draw near and worship, but they were only types and shadows of the true temple in Christ:

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. (Hebrews 10:1)

Jesus is the cornerstone of the new and living temple – the Christian church – which was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

So, Christ is the only head of the church, and any other claim to be the head of the church on earth is completely unbiblical.

In church government then, Christ is the head. The charter or constitution of the church are the authoritative words and declarations of the apostles and prophets recorded in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The authority of the apostles and prophets was demonstrated during their lives by miracles and prophecies that came true:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. (2 Corinthians 12:12)

The mighty works that the apostles performed proved that they had authority directly from God to speak for Him and write scripture. As the Word of God, the Bible is the highest authority for all of life for every government. But it is the constitution of the Christian church in particular, and Christian worship is to be ordered according to the rule of scripture.

After the last apostles died, their successors were established in the churches as elders (sometimes called bishops). Their assistants are called deacons. Elders and deacons are men called by God, spiritually qualified, elected by the congregation, and ordained by other elders through the laying on of hands.

The biblical pattern is that multiple elders are to oversee see each congregation. The New Testament clearly uses the titles “elder”, “bishop”, and “overseer” interchangeably.

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Currently, we only have one elder here at Lake Wylie Baptist Church – Pastor Jonathan. But we believe it is imperative that we follow the biblical model of church government, which is that our church be overseen and shepherded by a plurality of elders. We will be planning and working toward that over the next year.

The qualifications for elders and deacons are clearly laid out in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Both elders and deacons must be men of good reputation: above reproach, sober-minded, self-controlled. They must manage their own households, including raising godly, respectful children. Additionally, an elder must be a man of God who knows God’s word, and is able to teach sound doctrine, and correct those who misunderstand or misinterpret scripture.

In Titus 1, verses 5-9 we see a similar description:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,^[a] and his children are believers^[b] and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer,^[c] as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound^[d] doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

So each local church is to be governed by a body of qualified men called elders, and they have equal authority: each with one vote. And this follows the biblical pattern of wisdom found in a multitude of counselors, as well as the biblical principal of accountability or checks and balances.

At the same time, it’s important to recognize different giftedness and different responsibilities among the elders. Paul says that among the gifts that Christ has given are pastors and teachers:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17)

Some elders function in the office primarily as overseers, while others are pastors, and others are teachers. Regardless of their individual roles, all elders are responsible for shepherding the flock of God, feeding and guarding the sheep under their care.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

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shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,^[a] not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^[b] not for shameful gain, but eagerly; (1 Peter 5:2)

Church government also includes church membership. A lot of times, people say that church membership isn’t important or it isn’t required. It’s merely an invention of people who want to control others. But that’s just not the case.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

This means that church membership is at the very least two lists of names: a list of elders and a list of members. But the faithful practice of church membership is far more than that. Individual Christians need to know who their elders are, so that they can imitate their lives and submit to them. Elders need to know who their people are, who they are responsible for, the souls they are watching and shepherding - those they will need to give an account to God for.

John 10:2-4 says:

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. (John 10:2-4)

This is Jesus speaking about himself, but it is true also of all shepherds who imitate him.

Jesus demanded that his apostles and their successors should preach the Gospel everywhere and disciple the nations, teaching them to obey everything He commanded. Two of the things Jesus commanded we call sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Those who believe the gospel are to be baptized. Water baptism is a sign to all who witness it of the believer’s commitment to Christ. Likewise, the Lord’s Supper is the meal that celebrates the body of Christ: both Christ’s body broken on the cross, and His body gathered together in the church. All members of the body ought to partake of the bread and wine, when the church gathers together for worship.

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Civil Government

When we began today, I asked the question “What is government?”. I’ll bet that when most of you heard that question, your thoughts immediately went to the civil government, either federal, state or local. But I hope that you’ve seen that many of the duties and responsibilities that we attribute to the civil government are actually the responsibility of the other governments that God has established – particularly family government. I would suggest to you that many of the issues that we face today – many of the problems we see in our society – are due to the fact that we have abdicated the duties of family government, and have allowed the civil government to take on those responsibilities.

So according to scripture, what are the duties of the civil government? The Civil Government has been given the ministry of Justice.

Our first passage we read this morning, Romans 13, explains this clearly:

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:3-4)

Paul goes on to encourage Christians to render honor and tribute to all magistrates in authority.

The duty of civil government is to punish evildoers. This means that biblical justice is primarily punitive, not preventative. The magistrate’s job is not to run around making sure no one does anything evil; that’s what we call the “nanny state” or “police state”.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says:

When a sentence against a crime isn’t carried out quickly, people are encouraged to commit crimes. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

When just sentences are executed swiftly, evil is restrained.

The biblical vision of civil government is more fully revealed under Moses, beginning with the advice of his father-in-law Jethro in Exodus 18, where Jethro counselled Moses to choose good men from the people to be judges over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

The cases that couldn’t be solved at the lowest and most local level would be appealed to higher levels, and the hardest cases would be appealed all the way up to Moses:

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And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. (Exodus 18:22)

We also see here some other principles of justice that get fleshed out in the rest of scripture:

- 1) Wisdom is found in a multitude of counselors:

***Where there is no guidance, a people falls,
but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)***

- 2) Every accusation must be proven by two or three independent witnesses:

“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. (Deuteronomy 19:15)

- 3) Innocent until proven guilty and a right to answer accusations:

***The one who states his case first seems right,
until the other comes and examines him. (Proverbs 18:17)***

- 4) Principles for restitution for stolen or damaged property:

(Exodus 22:1-15)

- 5) The principle of retribution – eye for eye, tooth for tooth:

²³ But if there is harm,^[d] then you shall pay life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Exodus 21:23-24)

And rules for raging just wars:

(Deuteronomy 20:10-15)

Of course, the Old Testament is full of cautionary tales related to civil government. God gave Israel laws for kings, prohibiting them from acting like nations around them in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. But they disregarded God’s clear instructions, and the kings of Israel ended up falling into the same sinful patterns as those of the other nations.

Add to this the governments of Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, Pontius Pilate, and Nero, and the picture that we see of how civil government operates seems to only get worse.

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In Matthew chapter 22, Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees who tried to trap him with a question:

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius.^[c]²⁰ And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”²¹ They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:17-21)

His answer was very subversive. In his responses, Jesus granted that magistrates do have God-given authority, but he was also saying that the magistrate’s authority is not absolute. Paul and Peter are doing the same thing with their instructions for honoring magistrates, to insist that they do justice, administer God’s vengeance, and punish evildoers. What are the definitions of justice and goodness? Where would a righteous judge go to find out how to administer God’s wrath obediently? What should be done with murderers? What should be done with theft? What should be done with Christians? The answers are found in the Word of God – the Law of God.

God’s Word is the first and highest authority on how our civil governments ought to be organized and framed, and what justice is, and how it is to be carried out.

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Conclusion

God has established four governments among men:

- Self government
- Family government
- Church government
- Civil government

Self government is the foundation of all government for good or evil. And because of the curse of sin, every individual must be born again by the Spirit of God, and be given the gift of self-control, or self-government in order for the other governments to flourish.

Family government is assigned health, welfare and education.

Church government is assigned the oversight of Christian worship.

Civil government is assigned the task of establishing justice according to God’s Word, and punishing evildoers.

These are the governments established by God among men. As Romans 13 tells us, Christians must love and honor these authorities, and these authorities must love and honor the God who gave them.

Closing prayer

Lord God,

We thank you for the governments, that you have established, and for the those you have placed in authority. We know that you are sovereign, that your will is perfect, and each person that is in any position of authority – in family, church, or civil government – was placed there by you for your purposes and in your timing. For those in leadership, we pray that they will follow you, and honor you with the authority you have placed in them. And for the rest of us, help us to submit to your will, and to honor you by submitting to the authorities that you have put in place.

And now Lord, as we prepare to give our tithes and offerings, we pray that we may do so with willing hearts and open hands, as we thank you for all you are doing in and through our church and in our hearts.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.