

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

INTRO: In our last message we looked at secular government from the Exodus to the Monarchy. What we have seen thus far is the progress of government from a man ruling over a family and over part of creation to one man ruling over several families. Then, at the time of Moses, we saw one man ruling over a nation of people. All of these changes were initiated and encouraged by God Almighty. Then Moses is encouraged by his father-in-law Jethro, to choose other judges to help him with the smaller cases. We also saw the office of the prophet come into being. Furthermore, at this time God's law was written in a book so that man would now have God's will revealed in written words.

So we looked at secular government from the time of Moses up to the time of the kings. This morning we want to see the changes that took place in sacred government.

b. Sacred government

1) The priests and Levites

One of the big changes that took place in the spiritual lives of the people was setting up of a sacred government. That is, certain people were set out to look after the spiritual needs of the people. Let's see how this came about. You will remember that at the time of Moses, the people of Israel were in Egypt. You will remember that it took ten plagues before Pharoah became willing to let Israel leave Egypt. You will also remember that the last plague was the death of all the firstborn in the land, both of man and animal. However, of those families that had applied the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes, no firstborn died.

That all happened in Exodus 12. But look at Exodus 13:1-2. The Lord had spared the firstborn of the Israeli's and now He claims them for His own. As soveriegn God

He has the right to do that. Israel then had to redeem the firstborn, that is they had to buy them back from the Lord.

Well, Israel traveled to the Red Sea, where you will recall, God miraculously delivered them by making a path through the Red Sea for them and by drowning the pursuing Egyptians. After they had crossed, fifty days later God gave them the ten commandments at Mount Sinai. And at Mount Sinai, while Moses was a long time up in the mountain the children of Israel made some golden calves became idolators (Read Ex. 32:19-24). Well, Moses was really upset and listen to what follows (Ex. 32:25-29).

Well, in Numbers 3 we find that God then took the Levites in the place of all the firstborn (Num. 3:5-13). Later in this chapter we find that there were 22,273 Levites (40-43). The number of firstborn was 22,000 (3:43). The difference between the number of firstborn and the number of Levites was 273. Since God got the best end of the deal He paid the Levites 5 shekels per person for the 273 He had received above the firstborn that were His. So the Levites were set aside to take care of spiritual government. So we have a change taking place now in sacred government. Now one tribe is set out to see to the spiritual government of the nation.

A thorough study of the priests and Levites is a large and demanding study. However, they came into being during this time period and play an important role in sacred government all the way to the time of Christ.

2) The written Word of God

Another great change took place in spiritual government between the time of

Moses and the time of the kings. From creation to Moses, spiritual training was handed down by oral tradition. But now, in Moses' time, we have the first written Scriptures that give instruction for life. The writing of the first five books of the Bible took place at this time. They are called in Jewish literature, the Torah. The meaning is *law* or *direction* or *instruction*. For the first time in biblical history we have written laws of direction or instruction. These laws governed every aspect of life. The spiritual instruction is monumental. And by lesson, God taught man that he would now live by the written Word (Deut. 8:1-3; 6:4-8).

What conclusions do we draw with regard to government from the time of Moses to the kings? Well, we find them come to a time when both secular and sacred government is in the hands of God's people. Great progress has been made in government. However, we find the people doing every man that which is right in his own eyes. We find that instead of obedience to God, they are living for themselves. The fault lay not with the system of government, but with a disobedient nation. We will see the consequences of that now.

B. From the Monarchy to the Messiah

1. From Saul to the Babylonian captivity

a. Secular government

1) The transition to the monarchy

Well, God ruled Israel throughout the time of the judges. But after many years of this and fighting with many enemies, Israel got tired of the rule of the Judges. Turn with me to 1 Samuel 8:1-5 (read). Question: Was there cause for change? Was Israel right? Well, you say, I can see their

point well enough. They have corrupt leaders. I was reading in my old Bible and came across this note I had written there years ago, "When people reject God, they can act very spiritual about it." Here they blamed their leaders because they were living in sin. They then tried to use this excuse to get a king like the rest of the ungodly nations around them.

Well, let's see what Samuel and God think about this (read 6-8). God said, "Give them a king. Unless they learn the hard way they will never know they were wrong. Give them a king. And Samuel, they have not rejected you, they have rejected Me. I led them. I gave them judges. They don't like My rule."

Now I want to show you something. They blamed their system in order to get the worldly system they wanted. You see, God's system required faith and obedience. What they wanted was a king so they could kick up their feet and relax. Their problems did not stem from ungodly leaders, as bad as that is. Their problem was their own disobedience. We have seen earlier in Numbers 33:50-56 how they were to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. Then we saw in Judges chapter 1 that they failed miserably.

Now in verses 9-18 Samuel warns them what will happen when they get a king.

With these warnings clearly spelled out, what was their final decision? (Read 19-20). What was God's final word to them (21-22, "You can have your king, now go home.")

Well, Israel got a king. They got the kind of person people would naturally

choose. It is noteworthy though that he was from the wrong tribe. Let give you a little story, the story of the first king of Israel (read 1 Sam. 9:1-2). Kish, Saul's dad, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, was missing several donkeys. So he asked Saul to take a servant and find them. Well, they couldn't find the donkeys and Saul said, "Let's go back in case Dad starts worrying more about us than the donkeys." Then he thought, hey, there is a prophet close by. Maybe he can tell us where the donkeys are.

So as they went up a hill, they met some girls. And they said, "Is the Seer or prophet here?" And the girls said, "Yes, but you better hurry. He just came for a big sacrifice at the high place."

Well, the day before the Lord had said to the prophet, who was Samuel, "Tomorrow about this time, I will send you a man and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel. He will deliver you from the Philistines. The people have asked for a king and here he is.

So Samuel went out into the city and he saw this big good looking man and the Lord said, "That's him." When Saul saw Samuel he said, "Can you tell me where I can find the Seer?" And Samuel said, "Go up to the high place. You must dine with me today. Tomorrow I will tell you everything I wish to tell you. And by the way, the donkeys that were lost three days ago have been found. And on whom is the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and your father's house?"

And Saul said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of tribes, and my

family is the least of all the families of Benjamin. Why do you speak to me like this?"

Well, there are many other things in this story, but later all the tribes of Israel met at Mizpeh. Today they will publically choose a king. So Samuel narrows it down to a certain tribe then a certain family and then a certain man, and that of course is Saul. And so they looked for Saul, but he was afraid and he hid himself. But it is hard to hide from a Seer or prophet. So the Lord told them where Saul was hidden and they went and "unhid" him and brought him before the people and anointed him king of Israel. You must read the story (read at least 1 Sam. 9-12).]

2) The task of the king

There is a question you might well ask: Did God ever intend for Israel to have a king? We know from Genesis 49:10 that the kings were to come from the line of Judah. And before the kings came into existence, in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 we have very important guidelines given to those who would be kings later on. Our question is: Did God ever intend for Israel to have a king? Or did He build in a tribe and instructions for kings, knowing that Israel would ultimately reject Him and desire a king?

I do not know the answer to that. But in Deuteronomy 17:14-21 we find that God anticipated the time when they would ask for a king (read 17:14-20). In verse 15 we find that they were to consult God about who would be king and the king had to be of Jewish descent (read 15).

But now notice a principle that is so foreign to human government as to render God's system laughable in the eyes of human government (read 16). Let me remind you that this is not God's instruction to all governments. This is His instruction to His own people when they have a king. In short, God is saying, do not build up huge armaments or military machinery. Why should a king not build up military machinery? Because he would trust in them and not in God. The horse in the Bible is the symbol of strength and any king with many horses would rely on horsepower not on Godpower.

The second thing the king was not to do was to have many wives. Self indulgence is the temptation of kings. And since kings get to sit among people from many nations he might well take wives from many nations. And the long and short of it is Solomon.

Third, he was not to multiply silver and gold to himself. How will he trust in God for deliverance when he has horsepower? When God's people have horsepower, they do not rely on God's power. And how will the king remain spiritually on track when he has many wives. And how will he trust in God when he has of all kinds and riches? The simple answer is that he won't.

Now we have seen three things the king shall not do. Now look at the one thing he is clearly instructed to do (18-20). You see, the long and short of it is that the safety of a country does not depend on horsepower or money power. It depends on God power. There is nothing more crucial to leaders than to be saturated with the Word of God. Now the word "law" here is Torah,

referring to the first five books of the Bible.

When we study the kings one thing lacking for most of them was obedience to these great commands for the king (See 2 Kings 22:8-13).

3) The requirement of king and people

Read 1 Samuel 12:13-15. Samuel has shown from verses 1-12 how faithfully God led Israel before they asked for a king. He has pointed out how it was not the system but their sin that was the heart issue during their rule by God. And now he solemnly declares that if they do not trust and obey God when they have a king then both king and people will not continue. You see, the very same thing that was the issue when they were under the judges is still the issue. It was a matter of trust and obedience. That is a lesson as relevant today as in the past.

4) The separation of secular and sacred

One of the distinctives of governments today is what we call "separation of church and state". That simply means that the government does not give spiritual instruction to the church and the church does not interfere in the running of the state. The separation is between what I have called the secular and the sacred. It is an important point to note that the secular and sacred offices were kept apart from earliest times. You will want to make note of this for later messages in the NT. But in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21 we have this separation graphically described. A King, as high as his authority was, had no right to do the work of a priest (read).

Here we see very clearly the principle which later became known as *separation of Church and state*.

CONCL: We have now seen how one man became a ruler of a nation in the time of the judges. We have seen great progression in human government both in the secular and sacred realm. A key to remember here is that Israel, as God's people, have their own secular and sacred government. This morning we have seen the beginning of the monarchy, the rule of the kings. We have seen that the people chose a king against the wishes of both Samuel and God. What will happen? Will the people's system of government work? We will find out in our next message as we finish the time of the kings. We will see in our next message a very important shift in government, one that will help us understand secular and sacred government after the time of Christ.

Let me close with two personal application from this morning's message.

First application: Israel insisted on having a king, even when their leader and God were not happy about it. This kind of choice usually leads to disaster. God's way is always best in the end even though sometimes we cannot make sense of it at the time. Lesson: Trust God.

Second application: (Look at 1 Sam. 9:21 and 1 Sam. 15:17, read chapter later to see how sad this is.) The message of this chapter is this: *When you were small in your own sight you were made king; now that you became big in your own sight, the kingdom will be taken away from you.* Lesson: Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:6-7).