

## **Introduction**

### **Rule in the Midst of Your Enemies**

#### **War**

War is an unpleasant reality. It always has been and always will be until the Prince of Peace takes His position on earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and causes every knee to bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. [1]

War is always about one thing: control. Whether it is the 7 year-old bully on the school yard, the dispute with the neighbor across the back fence, or the dictator seeking a nuclear bomb, war is about who controls whom and gets their way when faced by those with differing views. Students of the Bible understand that this desire for control springs from the sin nature of man [2] which is based in pride, desires for pleasure and self gratification.

(James 4:1-2 NKJV)

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

So, we see that war comes from man trying to satisfy his desires at the expense of others. Yet, he is blinded to the fact that total fulfilment is found in God alone. So like it or not, war is a religious issue. Whether it is Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Secular Humanism, someone's religious beliefs are going to shape and influence the governments of nations. Unfortunately, when Christians miss this all important point, nations all around the world suffer and are taken over by anti-Christian governments. [2]

#### **Church and Government**

For most Christians, church and government are two different roads which briefly intersect from time to time as they travel through life. But in reality, the Bible presents church and government more like two parallel lanes on the highway to the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, the idea of Church and Government working together for a common goal is a foreign concept for most Christians. The result is a whole culture of Christians who, if they venture into the political arena, somehow feel they are no longer traveling a spiritual road. As a result of this flawed mentality, it might be accurate to say that the church has become so heavenly minded that it does little earthly good.

Those Christians who possess the spiritual insight and political resolve to travel the kingdom highway of church and government are few and, as a result, Christian influence on the culture has been steadily decreasing. We need a renewed vision, a new theo-political paradigm that strengthens our resolve to see godly government on earth instead of undermining it.

(Romans 13:1-4 NKJV) [3]

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

In the passage above, we also see the purpose of civil government: to praise good and punish evil. [4] In other words, civil government should promote God's views and it logically follows that Christians must therefore be involved in and provide leadership for civil government. Unfortunately, many Christians treat political involvement as an unessential "add on" to their theological framework or simply disengage from politics altogether. This is tragic. Christians are responsible before God to bring His principles to every area of life, including civil government.

We can see from this passage that, just like the church, civil government is an institution established by God and the Word of God provides guidance for both. There is a legitimate institutional separation between church and state, but not an influential separation. [5] This makes civil government as much a theological issue as it is political one.

### **Right and Wrong Thinking**

It is a simple fact: if we believe wrong, perceive wrong, think wrong, or have a bad paradigm, we will act wrong. All actions (or the lack thereof) are the result of corresponding thoughts or beliefs. [6] Wrong ideas and perceptions produce wrong results. A system of thoughts and beliefs that dictate our actions in a particular area is essentially the definition of a paradigm. A theo-political paradigm is our system of thoughts and beliefs that dictate how we apply our theology to civil government. [7]

This is precisely why many genuine Christians are disengaged from the political process and don't even bother to vote. They may genuinely seek to do the right thing but their belief system is weakening their resolve and/or misdirecting their actions. To quote Ronald Reagan, "...so much of what they know just isn't so." A new paradigm is needed.

Those who see the waning influence of Christians in government have worked hard at getting more Christians to exercise their civic responsibility. There have been some victories but we have also seen some defeats. Take the 2012 presidential election for instance, after which many conservative Christians across America were in a state of discouragement. After the dramatic amoral and anti-Christian shifts of the previous cycle, how could our nation reelect the status quo and a president who supports killing unborn babies, supports homosexual marriage, and continues to promote socialistic policies? Theories and excuses are abundant. Most explanations involve strategy, political mechanics, and failures in planning. But the real reason is much deeper.

There are roughly 125 million votes cast in a presidential election. This means that most anything north of 63 million votes would win nearly any national contest. [8] Now consider that in the United States, there are about 170 million Protestants (with about 80-90 million of those

being evangelicals) and 50 million Catholics. This adds up to about 220 million people who call themselves Christian. [9] One would think that pulling together just 65 million (about 30%) of those who call themselves Christian to vote in alignment with Christian values would be a relatively easy task. But that is not the case.

Lets look at the most central figure in the 2012 election: President Obama. Some exit polls showed that 42% of Protestants and 48% of Catholics<sup>1</sup> voted for Obama in the 2012 election. I can almost understand why a Christian might be tricked into voting for Obama the first time around, but not after the first 4 years - now we know who he is! Just the fact that he has openly supported abortion (in all its forms) and homosexual marriage should have been enough. But he has also appointed people to important governmental positions who include admitted atheists, socialists, communists, and pedophiles.

### **What is Wrong?**

Obviously, there is something drastically wrong in the ranks. Ignorance is not an excuse. Nearly half of Christian voters obviously are not looking to God or the scriptures as their guide, especially when it comes to government. There are at least two reasons for this, both of which may be hard to swallow for some.

#### *1) Counterfeit Christians [10]*

Undoubtedly, there are many who call themselves Christian, but are not genuine. It shows up, not only in their voting, but in their general lack of obedience to God. Jesus addressed this when He said,

(Matthew 7:22-23 KJV)

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The disturbing truth is that, instead of putting God and His purposes first, many people put what they think or what they want first. This is lawlessness. It is the abandonment of principle for instant gratification. Yes, we all struggle with this at some level, but when self-will becomes the foundation and guide for a person's life, he or she has become a humanist and is no longer a Christian. Such people can easily be persuaded to vote for free stuff and government oversight instead of freedom and personal responsibility. To put it in stark terms, Jesus simply isn't their Lord.

#### *2) Christians With Faulty Belief Systems [10]*

Addressing faulty belief systems among genuine Christians (as it relates to the kingdom of God) is exactly the point of this book. It shouldn't be surprising to us that we need adjustment. After all, no one I know thinks they have it all figured out; everyone has to be open to adjustment. However adjusting our beliefs is usually difficult because no one wants to admit that they have been wrong. But as pointed out above, the results don't lie. Something has to change. Though doctrinal debates can be quite wearisome, we must pursue truth. After all, truth is foundational to freedom because it is the truth that sets us free (see John 8:32).

Even Christians who are politically engaged and feel strongly about godly government, generally feel that Christian influence in civil government is a temporal earthly endeavor that has little, if any, relevance to the kingdom of God and eternity. Because politics and theology are generally seen as having different ends, believers usually see church and politics as separate issues, give priority to their religion, and leave politics to those who are less spiritual. Religious conviction always trumps political preference - as it should. But if we can promote and adopt a new paradigm that places true religion and godly politics as partners working for the same goal, then politics becomes an exercise of our faith and the separation disappears.

But at present, because of counterfeit Christians and faulty belief systems, the Christian community is so crippled and fragmented that we have become unable to lead in the culture. As important as analyzing polls and developing better methods of voter turnout is, we're going to have to go deeper and get to the root problem. We need a new theo-political paradigm.

### **What Must Happen?**

Christians have the potential to become a unified force. But for this to become a reality, two things must happen to counteract the effects of counterfeit Christians and faulty belief systems.

First, there has to be an increase in the number of genuine Christians. [11] That pretty much describes what we call "revival." By revival, we are talking about a spiritual grassroots movement that sweeps significant numbers of people into humble submission to the King of kings, empowering them to stand against evil in our culture. We are talking about a grassroots movement that is controlled by the Holy Spirit and cannot be controlled by the secular political establishment. Though revival is a supernatural event that seems outside our ability to facilitate, we should remember that God has promised to send it. Therefore, it will happen and we must prepare for it. We are participants, not spectators only.

Second, a grass roots revival, when it comes, has to have some level of leadership to guide the harvest into a godly theo-political paradigm instead of the old paradigm [11] which has proven to be ineffective. As Proverbs 29:18 teaches, there must be a vision to provide a restraint, otherwise the people will wander aimlessly and perish. A strategic framework must be in place to train the harvest according to the kingdom paradigm as a foundation for their lives. By training and equipping according to the kingdom paradigm now, we are establishing the leadership who will be able to train the harvest that will come with the next revival. Establishing this base of leadership not only prepares us for the revival that is to come, it may be one of the key dynamics that precipitates it.

By nature, a grassroots movement is difficult to control. That is why the Tea Party movement scared the political establishment half out of its wits and is viscerally attacked. Though the Tea Party has been effective and has shown us that the grassroots are waking up and are ready to engage, it is not primarily a Christian movement and is thus quite vulnerable. Christian movements are not immune to error, but true Christian movements have a distinct advantage because they have only one true leader, King Jesus. A grassroots movement that openly embraces the Kingdom of God as its goal and the Scriptures as its rudder has direction

and is difficult to steer off course. It is also much harder to infiltrate because true Christian character can't be faked, thus infiltrators are much easier to spot.

### **The New Wineskin**

Again, we must realize that the coming revival, if it is to effectively reform our nation's government, will require more than a multitude of souls being saved. It will require a new theo-political paradigm that, among other things, sees Jesus as a political figure, not just a religious figure.

The biblical term that best describes a paradigm is "wineskin." [12] Jesus said, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins." (Mark 2:22 NKJV). Therefore, the old wineskin (the old way of thinking) cannot facilitate political action. Attempts to pour political action into old ways of thinking usually results in a big mess. The old wineskin must be replaced with a new one through renewing the mind.

Those who have become used to their old wineskins often have a difficult time renewing their way of thinking. Switching metaphors a bit, Jesus said, "And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'" (Luke 5:39 NKJV). The key word here is "immediately." Our theological taste buds get used to a certain flavor and do not immediately recognize a new flavor as better. But after repeated tastes, the new wine begins to taste good, even better! The important thing is being willing to taste. Some of those who have become accustomed to old wine will simply refuse to taste the new. But there are those who are open minded enough to acquire a taste for the new.

### **Ruling Over the Enemy**

Psalms 110 speaks of God's people ruling in the midst of their enemies:

(Psalms 110:1-3 KJV) [13]

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Here we see a picture of Jesus seated in heaven, waiting, till the time when His enemies will be made His footstool. This will happen when the rod of authority and strength goes out of the church to rule in the midst of His enemies. It will be a great revival of people volunteering because they will see the power of God. It will be a revival of holiness, a new day.

Consider the phrase, "You will have the dew of your youth." This speaks of a new generation coming forth, but also the old generation being rejuvenated. These are those who are willing to taste the new wine, the new way of thinking. Imagine an old brittle wineskin that has been left out in the field over night. The dry skin has absorbed the dew and by morning has become soft again. This concept of the older generation and the younger generation becoming compatible and both able to receive the new wine is also embodied in Malachi Chapter 4.

(Malachi 4:5-6 KJV)

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Becoming pliable enough to receive new wine does not mean that the older generation doesn't bring important elements into the mix. When Jesus quoted Malachi 4:5-6, He put it this way:

(Luke 1:17 KJV)

7 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The hearts of the fathers being restored to the children speaks of the elder being rejuvenated and pliable, able to receive new wine. But notice that Jesus interprets the hearts of the children being restored to the fathers as: "The disobedient being restored to the wisdom of the just." This speaks of the younger honoring and receiving from the elder, which is essentially a way of describing discipleship. Then we see that this merging of the young and the old makes ready a people prepared for the Lord.

So we have to ask ourselves: "Is my way of thinking an old wineskin?" This is a difficult question to ask and even more difficult to answer because old wineskins rarely think they are old or unable to receive new wine. But if we are humble enough to recognize a need to change, then we can shuck the old and become the new. [14] Only those who will get before the Lord and let the dew of His presence soften and prepare them will be able to receive the new paradigm, impart wisdom to the younger, and rule in the midst of their enemies.

### **Paradigm Builder:**

Civil government is as much a theological issue as it is political one.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Rosenberg's Blog, Nov. 8, 2012