



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012 - LESSON NO. 8

WHAT DID JESUS THINK OF GOVERNMENT?

When Christians think of what the Bible says about government, they usually think of two Bible teachings. First, we are to obey “the powers that be” and we are to “obey God rather than man” if there is a conflict between what the government demands of us and what God says we ought to do.

But is our relationship with government actually more complicated than just those two issues? Did Jesus deal with other issues? What would Jesus have us to do where government is concerned?

This is an important issue, because we live in a world of governments. We cannot escape government. It makes the laws under which we must live. It collects taxes from us and uses the money to finance its operations and programs. It does not seem to care if we would rather not support an individual program; it takes our taxes and spends them on that program whether we like it or not.

In this lesson, we will not look so much at the two familiar statements we always cite, but rather we will look at the way Jesus actually responded to government as it intervened in His life and in His ministry.

Of course, there were actually two governments that played a role in Jesus’ life. One was local; one was relatively remote but very powerful. So we want to see how Jesus handled the local government of Judea and the more powerful government of Rome.

Two areas of government interest have challenged citizens all through history. But governments must find ways to raise revenue, and government must maintain a military force for defense of the citizens the government serves.

Many today might want to add social

welfare programs to the list of necessary government activities, but it is difficult to find such programs in the secular government of Jesus’ day, since such programs were virtually non-existent. Rome defending the security of its citizens, but it expected them to take care of themselves and each other.

Did Jesus pay taxes? He did. He paid the temple tax, which helped finance the local Jewish government (Mt 17) and he paid the civil taxes which helped finance the Roman government (Mt 22).

Did Jesus oppose the military presence of Rome? He ministered to a Roman centurion. He taught His followers how to deal with the Roman soldiers who occupied Judea. And He did make the ultimate submission to the authority of Rome.

We need to remember that there is a major difference between the Jewish citizens of the ancient Roman empire, and citizens in our country today. They were not free; we are. That means we have a say in our own government. We elect the people who serve in it. We are allowed to disagree with them publicly and to advise them on how we want them to run the government. Thus, our responsibilities toward our government are much more demanding than the responsibilities of the citizens in Jesus’ day were to their government.

It should also be remembered that Rome, especially at the time of Jesus’ ministry, was an excessively evil and self-serving government. Although we sometimes think our government is just as bad, it is not. Since it is God who raises up and puts down governments, bad governments will eventually fail and be replaced.

TODAY’S LESSON

We can’t escape government, and neither could Jesus. What should be our attitude toward those who rule over us and the rules they make for us? Is there ever a time a Christian should resist his or her own government? Should we pay taxes? Serve in the military?

NEXT WEEK

“Just be happy!” This is the world’s advice today. We have a right to be happy, we are told. Why, even the US Constitution guarantees happiness to us, at least according to the opinion of some. But does Jesus want us happy? Or did He have a higher goal for us?

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Dec 4: Socialism or Benevolence
Dec 11: The World’s Problems
Dec 18: Jesus and Christmas
Dec 25: No ABS classes

Jan 1: No ABS classes
Jan 8: Was Jesus Homeless?
Jan 15: Jesus and Money
Jan 22: Jesus Will Always Forgive
Jan 29: Jesus is Tolerant

Feb 5: Jesus and Government
Feb 12: Jesus Wants Me Happy
Feb 19: Jesus and the Word
Feb 26: What Should We Do?

Topics and dates are subject to change without notice.

Previous handouts for this class can be viewed, downloaded, and copied by going to my website. Here is the URL:

www.tmpministries.com/church.htm