

Government (Part Two)

The Old and New Covenants

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Today we are going to continue the series on government. We are going to begin this with just a bit of review so that we can have a running start into any new material that we are going to be covering today. We saw last week that to govern always implies the aim of keeping in a straight course, or smooth operation.

You might remember that the Greek word from which the English word "govern" is derived means "to pilot" or "to steer." But I added that it does not always imply for whose good, or benefit, the governing (or the steering, or the piloting or the holding on a straight course) is taking place. In all too many cases, the governing is for the good of those who are doing the governing rather than for the governed.

This word also implies an effort to create or maintain order and direction through education toward a certain goal. Therefore, it also necessarily implies authority and power to accomplish the same.

God is introduced, in His Word, as *governing His creation*. We went through in pretty rapid sequence the early chapters of the book of Genesis, and I showed you how, at the very beginning, God is shown governing His creation. It shows Him bringing order (piloting, steering) out of chaos. And then, very quickly, through a series of broad examples through the first several chapters in the book of Genesis, it shows Him carrying out the main functions of government.

These things are put in there for our learning—so that we can learn, through simple examples, what government is to be, what government is to do, how it is to be accomplished. Is there to be any delegation? How strong is the authority going to be?

We see God, also, educating the governed. Recall Genesis 2, where He instructed the man and the woman in regard to what they were to do in the Garden. They were to dress it, and they were to keep it. And He told them that they could eat of all of the fruit—of all of the trees of the Garden—except for one. So, He educated them to their responsibility so that they could contribute to the order. It was not something that He was going to have to *impose* upon them.

That is a very important concept because we understand that the greatest amount of liberty occurs when people are *self-governing*. It is when the government has to apply force in order to keep order (or, to keep people moving in a direction) that tyranny occurs. Also, the government becomes overbearing, and people then feel that they are in bondage to their government.

We also saw the beginnings of the delegation of responsibility in what was becoming the nation of Israel. I have leaped quite a number of chapters here—all the way to the book of Exodus. But you will recall that first God showed us the example in Exodus 18. Moses was overburdened with work. His father-in-law, Jethro, saw that and he made a suggestion. He told Moses, "If this suggestion is good with God, then I think you ought to go through with it." So Moses delegated responsibility, then, to seventy other individuals.

These men's responsibility appears to have been in civil areas. They were called "judges." That is a term that the Bible generally used for a governmental official who is going to be making judgments. They make judgments in regard to the direction that people are going to be going in, and also they make judgments in regard to penalties that are going to have to be imposed.

Then, using the book of Deuteronomy with the book of Numbers, we also saw the appointment of people in a more religious area. That is shown by the fact that God took of the Spirit that was on Moses and gave it to those seventy elders as well. We also saw Moses performing his function before the people in that he educated these men, both the elders and also those who were called the judges, to their responsibilities.

Now let us go to Exodus 19. I feel that what occurred here is very important to you and me under the New Covenant. Verse 9 is after God proposed to Israel that He be their ruler. This is something that is being done formally. A covenant is proposed, and they *consented* that God would be their governor, and they would be submissive to the laws. As a result of that, God would do certain things, and they would be a special nation to Him.

Exodus 19:9 And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

In chapter 20, God begins to speak the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:18-21 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

This is just about where we got to last week. God spoke directly to the assembled Israelites, and He was communicating with them directly—even as I showed you that God communicated with Abraham ("the father of the faithful") directly—thus establishing a pattern that is going to be duplicated somewhere along the line. And it is going to be important to you and to me in terms of this government that we have come under.

God also communicated directly to Moses. Now here He is communicating directly to the children of Israel, but He did it in such a way as to inject a sense of the *awesomeness* of this *privilege* that He was extending to this people. That is, the privilege of having direct access to Him! Not through

intermediaries, but He was offering them the opportunity to have direct access to Him. But He wanted them to know that this is a very great responsibility!

We see that they very quickly rejected it. And they asked Moses to stand between them and God. Moses, then, officially becomes "mediator." He was performing this function before, but now it is official—he will stand between them and God. So his responsibility was as an advocate *of* the people; that is, he laid the people's problems before God, but he was also an interpreter of God *to* the people. So, he was "the go-between."

Thus, we see a hierarchy of men begin to be formally instituted between God and Israel. God knew that it would be this way. He had prepared for it, in the organization of Israel—both civilly and religiously—even up to this time.

Exodus 24:1-3 Now He [God] said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him. So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do."

They were giving their consent, and it had to be done because if a government is going to be effective, there has to be the consent of the governed. If there is not the consent of the governed, then the governor has to exercise his authority and power to get the people to bend to his will. And that is not too happy a situation.

Exodus 24:4-5 And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.

There was no sacrificial system, yet, installed here.

Exodus 24:6-8 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

Israel is now, formally, both "church" and "state." Church and state were not neatly divided (as they are in the United States); but rather, overlapping, because the laws of God covered, and included, both areas. But it is clear—not from where we are here in the book of Exodus, but from other portions of the Bible, especially of the first five books—that the civil authority, as represented by Moses, exceeded that of Aaron. That is, that it exceeded the theological, or the religious, area.

Moses' authority was wider and more general. Aaron's was specific—in the area of religion. It was because of this that men like Hezekiah, and Josiah, and later on Ezra (who was a governor) were able to do as they did in reference to Passover. They simply took command in a serious situation and imposed the observation of Passover in a way that they felt fitted the severity of the situation. They made an *administrative decision* that they felt was necessary at that time. (However, there is no indication in God's Word that God gave approval for it as an "all the time" thing.)

We will jump in time to I Samuel 8. This brings us through the period of the forty years in the wilderness, and then on to the period of Joshua and the other judges. It brings us up to Samuel, who was the last of the judges.

I Samuel 8:1 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.

That was a governmental move, and it was not unusual for a judge to do that. It was natural for a judge to do that.

I Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah.

Now, they did this because Samuel's sons were not following in the footsteps of Samuel. They did not live like him. They did not believe like him. They conducted their lives like the people of the land. They were not the kinds of leaders that these people wanted. They gave every indication that they were going to be tyrannical (despotic), and these people did not want to live under them. So the people, then, say in verse 5:

I Samuel 8:5-9 "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." And the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

So we see that the system of judges—who were ruling Israel as God's agents, His representatives—continued until Samuel. Then the people let it be known that they wanted a king, like all the other nations. Verse 7 makes it clear that, despite having judges, God was still their Official. He was still their real Ruler, and His law was to be the law of the land.

I want you to cast your mind forward in time, as we come toward the New Covenant. While there were kings, God was still involved. You are familiar enough with the books of Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles. The record is there that God was still involved, in that He made His will be known through the prophets. But, otherwise, He was not 'to be seen' much. He was further and further in the background.

Now, Samuel warned the people—even as God instructed him to do. We are not going to go through it. But, if we would read the warning of Samuel, we would see him telling the people of an even larger bureaucracy that was

going to be developed—with God becoming ever more remote and the people having less and less control of their lives. That is contained within what we see there in the rest of I Samuel 8.

Let us go to II Samuel. In the seventh chapter, we find a very important covenant—and promise—given by God to David. Picking up the story in verse 8, this was God speaking to Nathan the prophet, and telling him to go to David and tell him this.

II Samuel 7:8-10 Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people . . .

I want you to notice that this promise, prophecy, covenant weaves in between the present (I mean, the present from the time of Nathan and David.) and then suddenly leaps, all the way, way in the future. It is not something of which God was speaking that was going to occur right then, in David's time.

II Samuel 7:10 Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more . . .

Now, we know that after David the Israelites were taken into captivity, and they have never returned to that place. So now this utterance becomes a prophecy. He is talking about something that has not occurred yet. It is still yet "future" for you and me.

II Samuel 7:10-11 And will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time

that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house.

Remember that! God will make you [David] a "house." Insert "family." Insert "dynasty." It means what people call today, the house of David. He is saying that what is going to occur is that there will be descendants of David who will always be available to sit on the throne—representing God in heaven. You see the king being God's agent through which He would govern His people, Israel. That is, God's Kingdom on earth, Israel. So, God is going to establish David through a dynasty.

II Samuel 7:12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Now it is focusing on one individual.

II Samuel 7:13 He shall build a house for My name . . .

Ah, now "the house of David" also becomes "the house of God." A very interesting thing is taking place here. The house of David becomes the dynasty of God.

II Samuel 7:13 And I will establish the throne [A symbol of authority. A symbol of government.] of his kingdom forever.

Now, we always have to remember that the word "forever" in the Bible does not mean "forever" as an English-speaking person thinks of it. It means, "as long as the conditions, or the factors, exist." We will not go to it here, but in Psalm 89 where this promise is reiterated, we find that "forever" indeed means "forever" in the way that an English-speaking person thinks of the word. Because the conditions, as God says, are that as long as the sun and the moon are up in that sky there, then David will always have a descendant on the throne.

II Samuel 7:16 And your house [dynasty] and your kingdom [A group of people with a government, with laws, and an area in which to live—from which they will never be moved.] shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

Everybody recognizes this as the promise that the Messiah would come from David's family and that David himself would not be in the position that is assigned here. Even though David will be a king over Israel (and he will reign forever), everybody understands that what is being talked about here is that Ruler—the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King of kings—that is going to come from David's dynasty (David's family). And it is His throne that will last forever.

However, let us get back to David's "present." The status quo that was established after Samuel continued all the way through the period of the kings and then, finally into the period of the governors. We read of several of them—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. There are others who are unnamed. But we find, in the biblical record, God getting further and further from the contact that He had with the Israelites. By the time that we get to what the scholars call "The Intertestamental Period"—that period from roughly the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel—God practically disappears from the scene.

Think about this. We will set the time as roughly about the time that Alexander the Great invaded Palestine, which was somewhere around 327 ^{BC}, or 330 years before Christ.

So Alexander comes into the land. He conquers Palestine and takes it away from the Persians, who formerly had been there. Before that, it was the Babylonians who were there. By the time we get to the period of Jesus Christ—that is, through the Greek and then the Roman domination, their governance of Judea—Israel has *fallen*! From the time of Mount Sinai and their direct contact with God, they have fallen from that direct contact to a

high priesthood, with their theological representative that was subject to Herod (Herod was appointing them), who was subject to Rome, who was subject to Satan.

Where is God, the government of God, in this picture? Well, the Bible tells that story as well—in brief form. Let us go to the book of Jeremiah 3. The subject is introduced in verse 1. It says, "If a man divorces his wife . . ." So, divorce is at the forefront of what he is going to say here.

Jeremiah 3:8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which
backsliding Israel had committed adultery . . .

Remember that the entering into the covenant was a marriage agreement in which the wife—Israel—consented to submit to the governance of her husband—God. So, Israel became His wife.

Jeremiah 3:8 I had put her away and given her a certificate of
divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and
played the harlot also.

You have to understand that God also divorced Judah. If that is so, then the wife is no longer under the authority of her husband. A divorce has taken place. Now who is the governor? I gave you some insight into that when I said that they had a high priesthood, which was under Herod, who was subject to Rome, who was subject to Satan.

Now, let us go to Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar has his dream of the great image. Then he could not remember it. So, he asked the magicians and soothsayers and wise men to not only interpret the dream, but to tell him what the dream was. Well, they could not do it. So now we find Daniel being summoned to do some interpretation. He tells Nebuchadnezzar, "I can't do it; but there's a God in heaven who is able to do it."

Daniel 2:36-37 "This is the dream. Now we will tell the
interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of
kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power,
strength, and glory.

I think that, normally, we would be very quick to jump to the conclusion that the kingdom that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar was Babylon. And that would be a correct answer. But, what did Babylon do? Babylon conquered Judah. They became Judah's "governor." God disappeared from the scene. The kingdom that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar was also His people, Israel.

Now remember the dream. It is important to this. The dream was of the great image. And it showed the successive revivals of the world-ruling Gentile nations. So, the governance of God's people, Israel, went successively from Babylon, to Medo-Persia, to Greece, to Rome, and through the revivals of Rome. And what has been set up here is that, for twenty-five hundred and twenty years, the people of Israel were very seldom exercising authority over themselves. They were virtually always under somebody else's governance and that "somebody" was not God, but rather Gentile nations.

It is this degrading circumstance that establishes the environment into which the Messiah was born and began to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

When the Messiah, the heir of David, comes, He announces a message about another kingdom—the Kingdom of God.

Now, remember that Israel was a kingdom. As such, it had a constituted authority and laws governing the subjects. With that in mind, and hearing Jesus make an announcement about another "kingdom," we also have to begin to see that this implies that this Kingdom will, in some ways, be similar to Israel. It will have a King. It will have authority that is taught in laws, and shown in laws. It will have power to enforce those laws. It will have a body of people over whom it is ruling. And it will have an area in which it is going to be ruling. So here comes God announcing another "kingdom"—one that belongs to Him—over which He is going to rule.

Now let us go the first chapter of Acts. Chronologically, Jesus Christ has died. He has risen from the dead. We are now, in this chapter, forty days

from His resurrection. Actually, that is not quite right. Forty days from the Wavesheaf offering would be better, I think, more accurate. It is just before Pentecost in 31 AD.

Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they [the disciples] had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

They certainly understood, clearly enough, that the message that Jesus Christ brought involved the establishment of a governing authority. It is implied here that it is going to be on earth. It does not say it directly; but it certainly implies that, because of the mention of the title "Israel."

Acts 1:7-8 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

They did not understand when this would occur. He did not answer when this would occur. But the answer that He did give, the promise of power, does relate to their question, because the receiving of the Holy Spirit, and power, would enable them to function in their responsibility as representatives of the Kingdom until it would be established. It is important to get that. The receiving of the Holy Spirit (and power) would enable them to function in their responsibility as representatives of the Kingdom until it would be established.

I have to lay some groundwork here so that we can clearly see from the Scriptures what this Kingdom that Jesus announced is to us *now*, and where this subject of government fits *now*, as well. I am going to be using more scriptures than I normally would, and doing less expounding. But we need to have this, because it is very important to this subject of government under the New Covenant.

Remember the question: "When are You going to restore the kingdom?" He said, "I'm not going to tell you; but you are going to receive the Holy Spirit, and you'll have power to function in your responsibility."

Let us go to John 18. The subject being covered here is Jesus' trial before Pilate. That is, one small portion of it.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

You might consider what Jesus looked like at this time. Remember He had already taken the beating, and He did not look much like a king. So I am sure that there must have been a measure of sarcasm in what Pilate said here. "Can you, poor creature, really be a king?"

John 18:34-35 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

He is asking Jesus, "Be specific about this charge. Be specific in your answer regarding this. Are you a king?" And Jesus' answer ought to be very clear to you and me.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world . . ."

Now remember that we are pursuing the subject of the announcement of the Kingdom of God and the entering into the New Covenant, and the subject of government. How does it apply to you and me now—in the church, in the twentieth century here? "My kingdom is not of this world."—meaning age, meaning system of things. It is the Greek word *cosmos*. It is not of this system. That is, Satan's system!

John 18:36 . . . My servants would fight [if it were. That is, "If My kingdom was of this world, then My servants would fight."], so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Pilate got the point. Jesus did not answer him specifically. The way that the interpreters have, unfortunately, worded this it makes it look as though Pilate was still in doubt. He was not in doubt. What he said was, "You are a king then?" It was still a question; but the Greek indicates surprise and exclamation. This creature, who was all beaten up before him—"You are a king!"

Pilate did not grasp the peculiarities of it. He did not realize what he was saying. But he did get the point that Jesus was saying, "Yes, I am a King."

John 18:37 Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Jesus was, in effect, saying to Pilate, "My Kingdom is better." Mainly, what He is talking about here is the nature of His reign, the nature of His rule. Not its location, or its time. Remember that He refused to give even His disciples an indication of time. He certainly was not going to give it to Pilate. However, that can be included in the understanding of the verse, but it is not primary.

Jesus is concerned about the *nature* of the Kingdom here. What He was telling Pilate is, "Pilate, My Kingdom isn't political. You have nothing to worry about from Me. I'm not here to overthrow the government and establish a competing power before you." So He is saying then, "I am not a rival. I'm not here for political reasons." If He had been, what would His servants have been doing? They would have been making war.

Pilate understood. He said to the people (to the Jews), "I find no fault in this man." He recognized that Jesus was not a political rival. Jesus was not out to overthrow the kingdom of Rome.

When we put this together with other verses, we can understand that Jesus is saying—to you and me—that, "My Kingdom is spiritual! It is, indeed, beginning now." He says, "I am a King!" You are not a king over nothing. He was a king over *something*; and that Kingdom was beginning. But its

installation as a power on this earth was not yet. We are talking about something that is not, at this time, a rival to governing authorities.

This will seem like a little bit of a digression, but let us continue on another important aspect of this Kingdom. We will go to the book of Revelation. We see here an indication of the time of the installation of that Kingdom, and it is still yet future to you and me (almost two thousand years removed from the time of Pilate and Jesus' trial).

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

You see—the Kingdom of God is going to fight against those kingdoms, and it will subdue those kingdoms.

Revelation 11:15 And He shall reign forever and ever!"

Connect that to II Samuel 7, and the promise to David—forever and ever.

Now, Christ was born to be a King. And there is a time coming when all the kingdoms of the world will become His, but not yet. That will not begin to occur until the sounding of the seventh trump.

Revelation 19:1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"

Revelation 19:6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Revelation 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Remember, again, the Kingdom of God will fight the kingdoms of this world at some time in the future.

Revelation 19:16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

We are gradually building on the foundation that we have laid. God is establishing a Kingdom. It is something that is in process. We know who the King is—that it is going to be Jesus Christ. He is not yet installed, but the prophecies show that He will be installed—beginning with the seventh trump, when He will begin to unleash the power of His Kingdom against the kingdoms of this world.

Now we find, added to this, that He is not just *a* King. He is a *King of kings*. This certainly implies that there are other kings bearing authority (i.e., governing power) under Him, subject to Him, but also bearing authority in the Kingdom of God. Who are these other kings?

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones [There is that symbol of governmental authority.], and they sat on them [multiple thrones], and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned [rulership] with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection . . .

And there we find, beginning to be defined, that these kings who are going to reign with Christ are those who will be in the first resurrection.

Now back to Revelation 5, and we will define it more specifically.

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and

tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

That makes it even more specific. The kings who are going to govern under Christ are not only those who come up in the first resurrection but they are also identified as those who are "the redeemed" by the blood of the Lamb (as we read, just a little bit earlier), and that the reign is going to be on earth.

In Luke 22, Jesus is talking to His disciples:

Luke 22:28-29 But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom [It is inescapable, what we are leading to here], just as My Father bestowed one upon Me.

Now we know that kingdom is the Kingdom of God, over which He is going to be King of kings.

Luke 22:30 That you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.

Now we know the Kingdom that is going to be bestowed on those to whom He is speaking is exactly the same Kingdom that has been bestowed on Jesus.

Luke 22:30 And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

So "the redeemed" are going to be those in the first resurrection. They are the firstfruits of God. They are going to be kings. They are going to be under Christ, in His Kingdom. They are going to be sitting on thrones, on the earth.

I Peter 2:4-5 Coming to Him [Christ] as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also [Christians], as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house . . .

We are going to begin to focus on this word "spiritual." Remember that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. My kingdom is not of this system." And yet we are going to see that elements of this Kingdom already exist. But

it is a spiritual Kingdom. We have here Christians, who are living stones, being built up "a spiritual house."

I Peter 2:5 . . . a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood . . .

"Royal" has to do with kingship. This is a priesthood that consists of kings—those who govern and wield authority. They are going to be installed in two offices that have been blended into one. There are both the civil, represented by the king, and there is the theological, or religious, represented by the priesthood. So we see "church" and "state" combined together with a closeness, an attachment, which is inseparable—and does not even begin to compare with what ancient Israel had.

I Peter 2:9 A royal priesthood, a holy nation [showing true spirituality], His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It is those who are chosen to be a royal priesthood who are being built up *a spiritual house*. Remember David? I spent a little time saying that the word house could just as well be translated family or dynasty. The modifier here is the word "spiritual." We have been chosen to be a part of spiritual house—a spiritual family, a spiritual dynasty—that *rules* under Christ (but not yet). "My kingdom is not of this world," He said.

As we collect this information that God gives to us, it is beginning to become clear. Those who hear the good news of the Kingdom of God and respond to it and enter into a covenant with God to become part of it are in process of being built into a spiritual house that is also a royal priesthood. And that is also a holy nation that is going to bear governmental rule over the earth as kings under Christ.

The key modifier in all of this (for terms of the subject that we are exploring here) is the word "spiritual." We are going to look on this from a related, but yet a different, angle.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one [there is a unity] and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Here is the illustration. Christ is like a human body that has many parts. Each one functions separately and yet together. Each part of the Body is empowered by God to carry out its responsibility (or function) within the Body, and yet every part of this Body is functioning for the good of the Body. Verse 13 is a key for understanding this.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Paul could have just as easily said that "we have been immersed." That is what the word "baptized" means. We have been immersed into one house. But the analogy does not fit quite as well. That is why I said that we are going to look at the same thing, but from a slightly different angle.

A body has many parts, all functioning for the good of the body. A house (a literal house) has many parts as well, and though not living, each one plays its part for the good of the house. We could have said "dynasty." We could have used that term as well. We could also have used the term "government."

The key for this verse, in this whole series of verses in this sermon, is the word "spirit." This is a spiritual installation into this Body. It is a spiritual immersion into this Body. It is done by one Spirit—God's Holy Spirit—that enables us to be part of that one Body. It enables us to have the powers to function, to carry out our responsibility, within that Body.

Romans 8:8-9 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit . . .

Can you see the way God is looking at you and me? Because we have received that Spirit, we are (to Him) "in the Spirit." We are part of a spiritual Body. We are part of a spiritual government. We are part of a spiritual church.

Romans 8:9-11 . . . if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Here is a focus.

Romans 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

Here is the function of those in the Body. It shows us where our light has to be focused. It is on things of the Spirit!

Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the flesh [that is, the natural mind] you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So it is the receipt of God's Holy Spirit that opens all of these things for you and me—enables us to be installed, immersed, into this one Body of which Jesus Christ is the head. It makes us a part of this government that is in process of being formed. It makes us a part of this *Kingdom* that is in process of being formed. So we become then part of a spiritual Family, in a spiritual house, in the holy nation, a royal priest, as a king.

We need to continue to show our relationship to this Kingdom. This time we are going to go to the book of Philippians. Paul is the writer here.

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note [that is, be aware of, take notice of] those who so walk [that is, conduct their lives in the same manner as the apostle Paul did], as you have us for a pattern.

This is a little bit more wordy way of saying, "Follow me as I follow Christ." He is saying here, "I have been following Christ; and I feel like I am a good example for you to emulate." "So, walk like I do," he is saying.

Verses 18 and 19 are parenthetical in nature. They are given to explain something. Thus, the thought that Paul had in verse 17 does not pick up until verse 20. I am going to read verse 17 again and then jump directly to verse 20, because there he gives the reason why we are to walk like he does.

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, so you have us for a pattern.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue [there is a governmental word] all things to Himself.

The reason the apostle Paul gives for us to live a certain pattern, a certain way of life, having certain attitudes about things, is because our citizenship is in . . . New York City? Chicago? Heaven! You see, these writers of the Bible never let get out of their eyes the focus on things spiritual, because they are giving to you and me the way that God looks at us.

Heaven is a spiritual place. It is not earthy. It is not physical. There is nothing secular about it. That is the headquarters of the spiritual Kingdom of God. A question: Does a human corporation extend to heaven? Absolutely not! A human corporation is a civil establishment. Those who make up the

church are those who have the Spirit of God and have been immersed (baptized) into *a spiritual Kingdom*, and have *a spiritual King*, and have *a spiritual headquarters*.

I might add here that they have *a spiritual citizenship*—so that no matter where we go, we are never people without a country. Remember that, because that will begin to become important. It is the reason why Paul said, "Our citizenship is in heaven." He does not want anybody ever to forget where the focus of our life is and where our loyalties belong.

There is a dichotomy that is created by this, though. That is, that though our citizenship is in a spiritual Kingdom, we are still here on earth; and we are in the flesh. That sets up very interesting things in relation to government.

Now, let us go to the book of Colossians. I want you to see this, because it helps us, again, to understand the way God looks at us.

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us [you and me—Christians—those who have the Spirit of God], from the power of darkness [of this world, living under the government of Satan, the Devil], and conveyed us [Translated us. That means, shipped us over—as it were.], into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

It is very clear that, though God's Kingdom is no longer on earth, it is a spiritual Kingdom. It is something that is going to come, beginning with the sounding of the seventh trump. Using that principle that God calls things that are *not* as though they *were*, He already considers us to be a part of that Kingdom.

If we are a part of that Kingdom, then we have to act like we are a part of that Kingdom. We are, of course then, above all things subject to that Kingdom's King, its government, and its laws. But let us add another thing to this, in the book of Ephesians. I will tell you, the apostle Paul did not avoid this subject.

Ephesians 2:4-6 By God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have

been saved), and raised us up together [This is how obvious this dichotomy is. We are still on earth; but He has "raised us up together"], and made us [Christians] sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Though we are not literally there, we are represented there *in Jesus Christ*. So, our Representative is there at the throne of God in our place because we cannot yet be there. But God considers us a part of that spiritual Kingdom. Are you beginning to see it very, very clearly? We are living parts of *a spiritual organism* to such an extent that it is as though we are in heaven, because we are *in Christ*. We are part of His Body.

Again, this other reality is that we are still flesh. So, even though this condition exists, we are being prepared to glorify God in ages to come. That is what verse 7 says.

Ephesians 2:7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians is all about unity—unity with God and unity with men. But we will never be united with man until we are first united with God. This subject (of government) has everything to do with accomplishing this unity.

I think that this is probably just about as good of a place to stop as any. Tomorrow I will not be picking up from this point. I will be giving a sermon on something else that is directly related to the subject, though ["The Right Use of Power"]. Also, at the same time, it has to do with Pentecost and "meat in due season." So tomorrow's sermon can be considered a part of this series, even though I am not picking up in the exactly the same place where I am leaving off here. But I am changing to this other subject because of the day of Pentecost. However, it does relate just a little bit "out of joint."