

“The Struggle of Politics”

Clash #3- Kingdoms in Conflict

INTRODUCTION

We live in two kingdoms, a spiritual kingdom and a physical kingdom. They are at odds with each other, and are constantly in conflict. How then do we relate to the political environment we find ourselves in? Jesus, surrounded by a contentious political environment, taught that we have responsibilities both to God and the government. This timely study reflects on the question “What is the Christian’s responsibility in politics?”

Ice Breaker (Optional):

What was the first presidential election you voted in?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Affirm the Purpose of Good Government

Q1. Read Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-15

Peter and Paul wrote these verses at the time in which Nero was ruling in Rome. They knew that God was able to use those in authority to do good and to bring judgment, even when their intent was evil. Who are those who Romans 13:3-4 tell us have a reason to fear the authorities? How does 1 Peter 2:13-15 clarify “why” we are to submit ourselves to authority of men? How do you feel the behavior of Christians influences the way the world views Jesus?

Accept the Position We Hold as Citizens

Q2. Read Matthew 22:17-21; Genesis 1:27

One of the responsibilities of a citizen is payment of taxes. The Pharisees questioned Jesus about the necessity to recognize governmental authority in this way in Matthew 22. What was Jesus’ reply to this in verse 21? The inscription and image of Caesar stamped into the silver coin guaranteed its value. Whose image is upon us? (Genesis 1:27) What are some ways we can give to the government what is due them and how do we give to God what belongs to Him?

Q3. Read Acts 5:27-29; Acts 21:37-40, Acts 22:19-22, Acts 26:32

Although God wants us to be responsible to those in authority, our first responsibility is to God. How did Peter and the apostles state this

in Acts 5:29? How do you determine that a law may cause you to disobey God? Have you ever felt you had to disobey a law to stay true to your faith?

Avoid the Pursuit of an Earthly Kingdom

Q4. Read John 18:36; Matthew 6:31-33; Philippians 3:20

Some people may try to promote the Kingdom of God through politics, even resulting in violence at times. What does John 18:36 tell us about using violence to promote God’s kingdom on earth? What reassuring perspective do you find from Matthew 6:31-33 in view of the political landscape? What do you think will help you keep a kingdom perspective during conversations you may have about politics? Considering time spent reviewing debates, news coverage and political articles, are you spending more time in pursuit of an earthly or a heavenly kingdom this year?

WRAP-UP

During his ministry on earth, Jesus didn’t pursue a political position. And although he was a king, his kingdom was not of this world. Government has been ordained by God to restrain evil and as Christians we have a responsibility to be subject to that authority, so long as it does not interfere with our ability to follow the laws of God. Our first allegiance is to Him and we must obey God rather than man. We can accept our civic responsibilities while standing firm in our faith, when we keep the perspective that our pursuit should be focused on a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one.

Memory Verse

... 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 22:21b ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge:

See if you can find scripture that supports your position on some of the issues being debated in the election this year.

Q1

Romans 13:1-4 ESV - 1 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.

1 Peter 2:13-15 ESV - 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Q2

Matthew 22:17-21 ESV - 17 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. 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."

Genesis 1:27 NIV - 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Q3

Acts 5:27-29 ESV - 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

Acts 21:37-40 ESV - 37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people." 40 And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people.

And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

Acts 22:19-22 ESV - 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.' 21 And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" 22 Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live."

Acts 26:32 ESV - 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Q4

John 18:36 ESV - 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

Matthew 6:31-33 ESV - 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Philippians 3:20 ESV - 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Prayers Con't: _____
