

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

THE FOUNDING AND FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT

Text: Romans 13:1-7

Introduction:

1. There are many opinions about how human government originated and what its purpose should be.
2. For the Christian, one's greatest concern is what God declares in such matters.
3. Thus, the disciple of Jesus must be a student of Scripture, seeking what the Bible has to say on this subject.
4. As American citizens, there is another concern: what did those who founded this government believe and write about the purpose of such a system.
5. Were the founders in agreement with the Bible?
6. Is the American system of government based upon principles of Scripture?
7. This study will investigate the Word of God to emphasize the true founding and function of human government.

I. The Founding of Human Government

- A. It is often taught that there are three divine institutions:
 1. The Home (Genesis 2:21-25)
 2. The Church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47)
 3. Government (Romans 13:1-7)
- B. However, there are some who claim that human governments are solely the work of men and displeasing to God.
 1. They claim that man was to rule only over the animal world, not other men (cf. Genesis 1:26).
 2. They believe that Nimrod established Babel as the first human government (Genesis 10:8-10).
 3. Of course, Babel became synonymous with rebellion against God (Genesis 11:4).
- C. Still, the Bible makes it clear that human government is ordained by God.
 1. God sets up kings and rules in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 2:20-21; 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).
 2. Governing authorities are appointed by God (Romans 13:1).
 3. Jesus approved of paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:17).
 4. Christians are to "honor the king" (1 Peter 2:13-17).
- D. Samuel Adams wrote: "...the only true basis of all government [are] the laws of God and nature. For government is an ordinance of Heaven, design'd by the all-benevolent Creator, for the general happiness of his rational creature, man" (Boston-Gazette, Monday, December 19, 1768).
- E. The majority of the Founding Fathers agreed with this sentiment.

II. The Function of Human Government

- A. Understanding the origin of human government, what does God declare about its purpose?
- B. According to the Bible, the function of government is to maintain societal order that promotes peace and liberty.

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1. "The Bible states explicitly that the central purpose and role of government is **to maintain order, peace, protection, safety, and stability in society which, in turn, enables citizens to live their lives in freedom**" (Dave Miller, *God & Government*, pg. 2).
2. This is accomplished by punishing the wicked and praising the righteous (1 Peter 2:13-14).

C. Government is to be a "terror" to those whose works are evil (Romans 13:1-7).

1. Those who do evil – thereby upsetting the order, peace, or safety of society – should fear punishment from the governing authorities.
2. Those whose crimes merit capital punishment should fear the enforcement of the death penalty.

D. Government is to be a source of "praise" for those whose deeds are good.

1. Part of maintaining order in society is promoting examples of good people who are kind neighbors and model citizens.
2. Pharaoh exalted Joseph (Genesis 41:39-43).
3. Likewise, Daniel was exalted in Babylon (Daniel 2:48; 5:29; 6:3).

E. The goal of such actions by government is to allow its citizens to be at peace so that they might exercise their freedom in living godly lives (1 Timothy 2:1-2; cf. Acts 24:2-3).

1. Thus, the Christian must pray for the government and its leaders.
2. Yet, the Christian also must use peace and liberty to do good and to live right.

F. When government praises evil and becomes a terror to the righteous, it is displeasing to God and dangerous to man.

G. When government becomes tyrannical, it is in rebellion against God.

III. The Founding Fathers' View of Government

- A. By studying the writings of America's Founding Fathers, one will learn that they accepted God's view of the purpose of human government.
- B. Samuel Cooke: "Civil government...the sole end and design of which is...the public benefit, the good of the people; that they may be protected in their persons, and secured in the enjoyment of all their rights, and to be enabled to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty" (sermon before the Massachusetts House of Representatives, May 30, 1770).
- C. The Continental Congress stated: "...government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind, and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end" (July 6, 1775).
- D. John Jay: "[W]ickedness rendered human government necessary to restrain the violence and injustice resulting from it. ...Every nation instituted a government, with authority and power to protect it against domestic and foreign aggressions. Each government provided for the internal peace and security of the nation, by laws for punishing their offending subjects."
- E. Alexander Hamilton: "Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint" (*The Federalist*, No. 15, December 1, 1787).