

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

GOD'S PATTERN FOR GOVERNMENT

Text: Deuteronomy 4:1-8

Introduction:

1. According to the Bible, the function of government is to maintain societal order that promotes peace and liberty (Romans 13:1-7).
2. The concept of "Nature's God" is the self-evident Creator who rules the world.
3. "Natural Law" refers to the fact that since God exists as Creator and Ruler, His law is applicable to, beneficial for, and incumbent upon all people.
4. Has God given a pattern for or example of the functioning of civil government?
5. If so, did this have any influence on the founders of the American republic?

- I. The Pattern of People's Law (Exodus 18:13-26)
 - A. As Jethro watched Moses judge the problems that rose among the children of Israel, he realized that there was a better system to be employed.
 1. Note that Jethro was not trying to undermine God (vs. 19, 23).
 2. Also, he was not trying to undermine God's role for Moses (vs. 20).
 - B. By his advice, and with God's approval, Israel was organized into a "commonwealth of freemen."
 1. Individual liberty was paramount in their society (Exodus 20:2; Leviticus 25:10).
 2. One of the reasons God punished His people with captivity was their institution of slavery among themselves (Jeremiah 34:16-17).
 - C. Thus, some 3 million people were formed into groups under representatives so matters of law could be taught and enforced effectively.
 1. If a matter could not be resolved in a group of 10 families, it was elevated to the ruler of the group of 50.
 2. Only the most difficult matters would reach the highest ruler or judge – Moses, the law giver.
 - D. Consider how this system emphasizes self-governance on a local level.
 - E. The founders of America looked to God's Word in organizing the representative republic system for the new nation.
 1. In fact, some wanted the seal of the United States to feature an image of the Israelites being led by the pillar of fire in the wilderness.
 2. Benjamin Franklin came up with a design that pictured Pharaoh's army being overthrown in the Red Sea, encircled with the words: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."
 - F. Keep in mind that it took 180 years for this government to be organized and implemented (1607 – 1787).
- II. The Influence of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)
 - A. Moses asked: "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8).
 - B. The question was rhetorical; there was no other nation so blessed by God (Psalm 147:19-20).

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- C. Yet, the influence of the Law of Moses – and, particularly, the Ten Commandments – has been felt by many nations through the ages.
 - 1. As a guide for morality
 - 2. As a guide for government
- D. John Quincy Adams wrote: "The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code; it contained many statutes ...of universal application – laws essential to the existence of men in society, and most of which have been enacted by every nation, which ever professed any code of laws. But the Levitical was given by God himself; it extended to a great variety of objects of infinite importance to the welfare of men...."
- E. John Adams stated: "If 'Thou shalt not covet,' and 'Thou shalt not steal,' were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society, before it can be civilized or made free."
- F. Because of this view of Scripture, the founders believed that all citizens should be taught the Bible.
 - 1. That was God's pattern for government (Deuteronomy 4:39-40).
 - 2. "Whereupon, the Congress was moved, to order the Committee of Commerce to import twenty thousand copies of the Bible" (September 11, 1777).
 - 3. "Whereupon, Resolved, That the United States Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an instance of the progress of arts in this country, ...they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States, and hereby authorise him to publish this recommendation in the manner he shall think proper."
- G. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story declared: "One of the beautiful boasts of our municipal jurisprudence is the Christianity is part of the Common Law.... There never has been a period in which the Common Law did not recognize Christianity as lying at its foundations.... I verily believe Christianity necessary to the support of civil society."

III. The Reign and Rule of God

- A. Whether or not a society or government is based upon the principles of Scripture, God still rules in the kingdoms of men (cf. Daniel 4:17).
- B. God is King of kings and will one day judge the world by His standard – the Gospel of Christ (John 12:48).
- C. Nations would do well to submit to the reign and rule of Almighty God.
- D. However, even in wicked and cruel countries, men and women can yield their hearts and lives to the King of the universe (Philippians 4:22).
- E. By doing so, one will find salvation and eternal life in Heaven.

Conclusion:

- 1. Have you followed God's pattern for salvation? (Romans 6:3-4, 17)
- 2. Are you following God's pattern for your life?