

# Church and State: A Biblical Theology

## Christ is Lord over all

### Daniel 2:31-35

<sup>31</sup>“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. <sup>32</sup>The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup>As you looked, **a stone was cut out by no human hand**, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image **became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.**”

### Daniel 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup>I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup>And **to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

## So what now?

- does supremacy of Christ compel us to get involved in politics?
- does OT Israel provide a model for contemporary America?
- the key is to realize the place of Israel in redemptive history

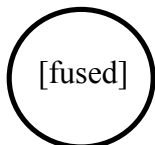
## Two alternating political paradigms in the Bible:

### theocracy

- God reigns, no rivals
- church and state fused

Kingdom of God

The World



### dual citizenship

- Christians live in two realms
- church and state separate

Kingdom of God

The World



## A Biblical Theology of Kingdom in the Bible

- Bible alternates between theocracy and dual citizenship

Eden	Patriarchs	Israel	Exile	New Creation
theocracy	<i>dual citizenship</i>	theocracy	<i>dual citizenship</i>	theocracy

## Eden [theocratic rule]

### Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make **man in our image**, after our likeness. And let them have **dominion over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

## Patriarchs [dual citizenship]

### Genesis 23:3-4

And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, “I am a **sojourner and foreigner among you**; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

### Hebrews 11:13

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were **strangers and exiles on the earth**.

## Israel [theocratic rule]

### Exodus 23:23-33

When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall **utterly overthrow them** and break their pillars in pieces.

And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. **You shall make no covenant with them** and their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

## Exile [dual citizenship]

### Jeremiah 29:1-7

These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem **to the surviving elders of the exiles**, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, **to all the exiles** whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But **seek the welfare of the city** where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for **in its welfare you will find your welfare.**”

## New Creation [theocratic rule]

### Revelation 19:11-16

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are **many diadems**, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which **to strike down the nations**, and **he will rule them** with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords.**

## Question: What about the New Testament period? Is it a theocracy or is it dual citizenship?

### 1 Peter 2:11-14

Beloved, I urge you **as sojourners and exiles** to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. **Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution**, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

### Mark 12:14-17

“**Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?** Should we pay them, or should we not?” But, knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar's.” Jesus said to them, “**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**” And they marveled at him.

### Romans 13:1-4

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. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

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, 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.

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

### Introduction

- this is a question that has always vexed believers
- good Christians disagree and it's okay to disagree
- there are competing models of church and state in the Bible
- the answer is not in Systematic Theology, but Biblical Theology

### The problem: Christ is Lord over all

**Daniel 2:31-35** <sup>31</sup>“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. <sup>32</sup>The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup>As you looked, **a stone was cut out by no human hand**, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image **became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.**”

### Vision of the world filled with the Kingdom of God

- so, isn't this a manifesto for action for us?

**Daniel 7:13-14** <sup>13</sup>I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup>**And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.**

### Christ is not just given a “spiritual kingdom” but political dominion

#### So what now?

- does supremacy of Christ compel us to get involved in politics?
- does OT Israel provide a model for contemporary America?
  - rhetoric of “America as a Christian nation” | See You At The Pole (2 Chronicles 7:14)

### The key is to realize the place of Israel in redemptive history

---

### Two alternating political paradigms in the Bible:

#### Theocracy

- God reigns, no rivals
  - rival powers are demonic and must be crushed
- church and state fused
  - no dual authorities | there is only one legitimate ruler

Kingdom of God

The World

[fused]

## Dual Citizenship

- Christians live in two realms
    - Kingdom of God is spiritual and moral | demands your ultimate allegiance
    - Earthly Kingdom is temporary and fading, but legitimate | Christians are called to be good citizens
  - church and state separate
    - there are dual power centers | creates tension for believers
- 

## A Biblical Theology of Kingdom in the Bible

- Bible alternates between theocracy and dual citizenship

Eden	Patriarchs	Israel	Exile	New Creation
theocracy	<i>dual citizenship</i>	theocracy	<i>dual citizenship</i>	theocracy

### Eden [theocratic rule]

**Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make **man in our image**, after our likeness. And let them have **dominion over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

### God is the uncontested ruler

- man is vice-regent, a vassal king under the ultimate king
- there are rival powers (Satan) who must be opposed and defeated

### Patriarchs [dual citizenship]

**Genesis 23:3-4** And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, "I am a **sojourner and foreigner among you**; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

**Hebrews 11:13** These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were **strangers and exiles on the earth**.

### Notice, Abraham does not wage war against the Hittites

- unlike Adam's mandate in the garden, Abraham does not attempt to crush or destroy pagans
- idea of "sojourner" | meaning "pilgrim"
- this earthly world is not Abraham's home, but he is travelling to his ultimate home
- therefore, when you are a sojourner, you don't settle down permanently

### Israel [theocratic rule]

**Exodus 23:23-33** When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall **utterly overthrow them** and break their pillars in pieces.

And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. **You shall make no covenant with them** and their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

## Within the Promised Land, there is to be *no tolerance of dual powers*

- all rivals to the Mosaic theocracy are to be crushed and driven out
- no treaties, no tolerance, no legitimacy for pagan rule

## Exile [dual citizenship]

### Jeremiah 29:1-7

These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem **to the surviving elders of the exiles**, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, **to all the exiles** whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But **seek the welfare of the city** where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for **in its welfare you will find your welfare.**”

## God’s people are living in Babylon

- recall, this is the city that destroyed Jerusalem | arch-typical city of evil and paganism
- but notice no command to revolt or foment rebellion, but to live in peace
- doesn’t mean give allegiance to Babylon (see examples of Daniel and friends)
- but to be good citizens of the earthly city and work for its shalom

## New Creation [theocratic rule]

**Revelation 19:11-16** Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are **many diadems**, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which **to strike down the nations**, and **he will rule them** with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords.**

## Notice the change in posture towards unbelievers

- in exile, believers are to “live in peace”
- with the coming of Christ, there is a final cosmic battle and the destruction of unbelievers
- Christ will reign as the uncontested lord of lords

## Question: What about the New Testament period? Is it a theocracy or is it dual citizenship?

**1 Peter 2:11-14** Beloved, I urge you **as sojourners and exiles** to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. **Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution**, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

## Notice the language: “exiles” and “sojourners”

- “be subject” – be good citizens, but don’t give ultimate allegiance
- “emperor” is the Roman emperor: Nero, Claudius, Caligula

**Mark 12:14-17** “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” But, knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar’s.” Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.

### **To pay taxes is an act of tribute and submission**

- we must remember Rome was a theocracy | emperor claimed divine status and was high priest
- “yes” – submit to Roman’s political legitimacy
- “no” – do not submit to Roman’s pretensions of theocratic and spiritual rule

**Romans 13:1-4** 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. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

### **Rome was virulently anti-Christian**

- and yet, Paul says, Rome is a legitimate governing power
- but, he reminds believers, Rome is under God

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, 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.

### **This ends the quest for a “Christian nation”**

- role of government is to be an agent of righteousness, not to wield spiritual authority
- dual kingdoms: civil magistrates who are ministers of rule of law, and church as ministers of gospel

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

### **No theocracy in this epoch of redemptive history**

- we live “between the times”: from undisturbed theocracy of garden to new theocracy of New Earth

### **Some questions to think through**

- what does dual citizenship say about individual Christians participating in politics?
- does your Christian faith inform and guide the way you vote, which political party you identify with?
- what does dual citizenship theology say to rhetoric of “taking America back” as a Christian nation?
- can you vote for a non-believer?
- what about civil disobedience?
- what about political rebellion?