

## *“Patriotism, Christianity, and Dissent”*

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<sup>17</sup> “For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife’” (Mark 6:17, 18).

I find John's statement and cause for imprisonment striking in light of our presidential elections on Tuesday (November 4, 2008). Although I would probably argue that the prophet's role in a theocracy, John's role in a monarchy and our role in a democracy might be different, there are similarities. I am told pastors cannot tell you to vote for specific candidates, there is, however, a right and wrong in what each of our presidential candidates promote and the Bible does speak to issues.

Does the Bible promote a system of honorable work? Are we to concern ourselves with the poor, widowed, and orphaned? Is greed and the exploitation of the less fortunate sinful? Should we be warmongers or peacemakers? Does war, like divorce, exist simply because of the hardness of men's hearts? Should laziness be enabled? Does the issue of personal convenience justify taking the life of the unborn child, infanticide or euthanasia? Is the use of our natural resources an expression of biblical stewardship and mankind's dominion over the earth? When does environmentalism become idolatry and exploitation become criminal?

Should crime be punished? Does the government have a biblical right to carry the “sword” and to take the life of those who commit capital offenses? Is it biblical for a government to tax its people? Is it ever right for Christians not to pay taxes or speak against excessive taxation? All of these issues are addressed by the Government, but do we not have a responsibility as Christians to concern ourselves with these areas as well?

If a pastor is to be blameless and above reproach, why would our president or government officials get a free pass on unethical behavior? Are we so biblically illiterate that we no longer care what a man's integrity is as a government official? Has the position of president become a popularity contest?

Let us not deceive ourselves. There is no perfect system of justice until such a time as God comes back and dwells among us in a tangible way. Yet we must never let evil men rule without our voice of dissent.

We sometimes fail to see how neither party is truly biblical. Christianity supports the government because God appoints who rules and we are to honor those who occupy the office. Being patriotic is biblical. It would be just as right to be patriotic if you lived in modern Iraq or ancient Rome. Sometimes our patriotism is to support and sometimes it is to speak against, but either action is still patriotic.

As Americans, we cannot afford to confuse our American ideology, which we have lived with for 200 plus years, with biblical Christianity. The two are not the same. Are there points of

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overlap? Absolutely, but let us not think the two are the same. You and I are first Christians, and then we are Americans. Should Christians fight for and vote for biblical legislation and fight against and vote against immoral and unethical legislation? Absolutely.

Regardless as to what our government does, we have a clear call from the Scripture as it relates to our responsibilities as a Church and as Christians. You and I have no king but Jesus, and we must never forget that we are citizens of another country. We have the blessing of living in America. It is by God's design and choice that such a nation exists. What it will look like in the coming years will be very interesting and perhaps fear-filled for the following generations, but this does not alter what we are to be about. We are to love God first and then as a consequence of His love, to love our neighbors whether they live across the street, in another state, or in another nation. May we vote for what is right and not simply for what is convenient.