

GOD INTENDS FOR HIS CITIZENS TO BE OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER. WITHIN THIS CONTEXT OF MORALITY HE HAS A REMNANT OF BELIEVERS WHO ARE FURTHER BLESSED BY THE LORD. THEY TOO, ARE EXPECTED TO EMULATE MORALITY - HONESTY, INTEGRITY, JUSTICE. THIS IS THE "STUFF" THAT PRESERVES A NATION. BELIEVERS ARE TO BE GOOD CITIZENS OF THEIR NATION AS WELL AS RIGHTLY RELATED TO THEIR LORD.

THE PROBLEM WITH JUDAH WAS THAT THEY DECLARED THE LORD'S NAME IN NAME ONLY. THEY WERE PRACTICING IDOLATERS.

THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY

Isaiah 48:1 **"Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD and invoke the God of Israel--but not in truth or righteousness-- 2 you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel--the LORD Almighty is his name:**

THE PROBLEM WITH JUDAH WAS THAT THEY DECLARED THE LORD'S NAME IN NAME ONLY. THEY WERE PRACTICING IDOLATERS. EVEN KING SOLOMON OFFERED SACRIFICES AND INCENSE IN THE IDOLATERS' "HIGH PLACES"¹ WHILE DECLARING HIS LOVE FOR THE LORD. SOLOMON'S PRACTICE GREATLY COMPROMISED HIS CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD AND LED TO HIS EVENTUAL UNCHECKED PLUNGE INTO THE IDOLATRY OF POLYGAMY AND OTHER FORMS OF IDOLATRY. IDOLATRY WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN ISAIAH'S DAY - IT RESULTED IN GOD DISCIPLINING JUDAH - SENDING THEM INTO THE CAPTIVITY OF THE BABYLONIANS.

THE SAME PROBLEM EXISTS TODAY. GOD CANNOT BLESS A NATION THAT WORSHIPS FALSE gods. HE MUST BE THE GOD OF ANY NATION. IDOLATRY SHORT-CIRCUITS EVANGELISM'S WORK - WHICH IS THE VERY REASON FOR THAT NATION'S EXISTENCE². GOD WILL NOT BLESS A NATION THAT IS STEEPED IN IDOLATRY. IDOLATRY COMES IN MANY FORMS. SOME OF TODAY'S IDOLS ARE "HUMANISM" WHERE MAN ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN HIS WORLD BY EXCLUDING THE CREATOR-GOD. OTHER IDOLS WOULD INCLUDE THE NEW-AGE RELIGION WHERE MAN IS ACTUALLY DEIFIED AND WORSHIPED AS A god. THE RELIGION OF THE EVOLUTION MAKES NATURE A god IN AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE CREATOR-GOD. FINALLY, THERE ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF DEVIL WORSHIP WHICH IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY THE LORD³. ALL THESE CONTRIBUTE TO LIMIT THE REACH OF THE GOSPEL IN OUR NATION.

AS GOES GOD'S PEOPLE, SO GOES A NATION

Prov 14:34 **Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.**

THIS IS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EQUATION OF GOD BLESSING GODLY LEADERSHIP IN A NATION - GODLY CITIZENS BRINGS GODS BLESSING TO THAT NATION JUST AS GODLY LEADERSHIP DOES. THE BELIEVER IS NOT TO REMOVE HIMSELF FROM THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIS CITIZENSHIP⁴, BUT RATHER, HE IS TO ENTER INTO *WHATEVER*

¹ 1 Kings 3:3

² Acts 17:24-28

³ Deut 18:11-15.

⁴ Romans 13:6 **For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.** The believer is to obey the tax laws, the political practices, honor the leaders (pray for them), and to obey the laws they enact. They are not to participate in their evil as Daniel and his friends

FORM OF GOVERNMENT WITH THE GRACIOUS ATTITUDE THAT HE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE "KING'S" COUNTRY IN A POSITIVE WAY. THIS IS THAT NATION'S ONLY DEFENSE AGAINST IDOLATRY.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO HAVE GODLY LEADERSHIP - GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM FOR A NATION TO ENJOY GOD'S MANIFOLD COMMON-GRACE BLESSINGS. THE WORD "EXALTETH" MEANS TO LIFT UP HIGH - TO PROMOTE TO A PLACE OF GREATNESS. WHAT OUR UNSAVED FRIENDS DO NOT REALIZE IS THAT IT IS NOT DEMOCRACY OR "TRICKLE DOWN ECONOMICS" OR ANY OTHER FORM OF ECONOMIC POLICY THAT BRINGS ABOUT PROSPERITY AND PEACE IN A NATION BUT THE VERY SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD THAT PROVIDES JUST THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR US SO THAT WE CAN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROSPER AND HAVE PEACE. BOTH SIDES OF THE EQUATION MUST BE SATISFIED FOR MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM GOD.

A GOOD CITIZEN FEARS BOTH HIS LORD AND HIS "KING."

Prov 24:21 **Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious,**

TO FEAR THE LORD AND THE KING IS TO HAVE GREAT REVERENCE FOR THEM. JUST AS THERE IS A LACK OF HONORING THE LORD IN OUR LAND THERE IS, LIKEWISE, ALTOGETHER TOO MUCH DISRESPECT FOR THE LEADERSHIP OFFICES OF OUR LAND. THE GOOD CHRISTIAN CITIZEN HOLDS HIS COUNTRY'S LEADERS IN HIGH ESTEEM *BECAUSE OF THE DIVINELY APPOINTED OFFICE NOT THE MAN*. IN OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT, OUR MEN GET ELECTED. THEY ARE NOT A DYNASTY. EVEN IF WE DID NOT VOTE FOR A CERTAIN LEADER, WE SHOULD HOLD HIM UP TO THE LORD. PRAYING THAT THE LORD STRIKE HIM DEAD OR REMOVE HIM IS NOT A VALID PRAYER. WE *SHOULD* PRAY THAT THE LORD WOULD DIRECT HIS HEART ACCORDING TO PROVERBS 21:1⁵ *EVEN IF WE PERCEIVE THAT HE IS AN "EVIL" MAN*. AT SOME POINT WE, AS BELIEVERS, NEED TO RELY ON THE PROMISE OF GOD THAT THE MAN IS, INDEED, IN THE HAND OF THE LORD.

PAUL RESPONDED TO THIS LACK OF RESPECT OF ROMAN LEADERSHIP BY THE CHRISTIANS IN THE CHURCH AT ROME WHEN HE SAID THAT THESE "EVIL" RULERS WERE APPOINTED BY THE LORD TO DO *HIS* BIDDING. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT GOD DOES THE APPOINTING OF GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS. I BELIEVE THERE IS A PLACE IN THE POLITICAL ARENA FOR QUALIFIED BELIEVERS. WE NEED TO ATTEND TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD AND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO OUR COUNTRY - ALL THE WHILE DOING THE MINISTRY OF AMBASSADORS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, RECONCILING SINNERS TO THE LORD.

A GOOD CITIZEN OBEYS THE LAWS OF THE LAND.

Romans 13:1 **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.**

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY COMES INTO PLAY AGAIN. WE, AS BELIEVERS, MUST ACCEPT THE FACT THAT EVEN IF OUR NATION IS NOT HEADED IN THE DIRECTION WE THINK IT SHOULD, GOD IS STILL ON

EVEN IF OUR NATION IS NOT HEADED IN THE DIRECTION WE THINK IT SHOULD, GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE. WE ARE NOT POLITICAL DEISTS.

exemplified (Dan 1:8; 3:13-18; 6:4-21).

⁵ Prov 21:1 **The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.** (NIV)

THE THRONE. WE ARE NOT POLITICAL DEISTS⁶. GOD IS STILL RUNNING THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF MAN SO THAT THE MAXIMUM OF MEN WHO WOULD DO SO, MIGHT COME TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF. THE POLITICS OF ANY NATION IS INCIDENTAL TO THE OVERALL REDEMPTIVE POLICY OF GOD.

THE CHRISTIAN THEN AND NOW IS COMMANDED BY PAUL TO OBEY THE LAWS AND POLICIES OF THE LAND *EXCEPTING EVIL PRACTICES*. HE IS SO STRONG IN SAYING THIS THAT IF WE DISOBEY THE LAW WE ARE DISOBEYING GOD, HIMSELF.

⁶ A Deist was one who believed that even though there is a Creator-God, He has left the universe alone to run on the laws and operating principles He set in motion and has no interest in it or the affairs of man.