

24/2/87

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

God's Government and Your Role in It (Part I)

I. Introduction

- A. Chaos! That one word, better than any other, describes this world's political state of affairs. In country after country around the globe, people enjoy no stability of administration or government.
- B. One powerful example at this time is Lebanon, which is a virtual whirlpool of conflicting and bickering splinter groups, each desiring to inflict its brand of living on the others. *SMILING IN GILTS!*
- C. Even in countries with relative stability, like the United States, certain "normal" fluctuating forces like the economy, the tax structures and changes of the party in power keep us all on the edges of our seats wondering what will happen to us and our loved ones next. *NO MORE*
- D. It is plain that this worldwide chaos is caused, in the end, by one thing and one thing alone -- the absence of a sound, worldwide government that can give order, predictability and peace to this troubled world.
- E. But while the world must wait until the Millennium to learn of God's government, we in the Church should -- no, must -- fully understand it now. And we must not merely understand it in academic theory, but we must understand how we as leaders in the Church can apply it in practical terms today.

II. SPS

This lecture will explain the principles and functioning of God's government, along with your part in it as leaders in the Church.

III. Need

Most of us can probably recite a few of the most important principles of God's government. Because we can, we might make the wrong assumption that we fully understand God's government and then skip on to study other things. Such an attitude is an error of the greatest magnitude, for

more problems in the smooth running of God's Church -- including the functioning of the local church, with its elders and deacons -- can be traced to ignorance of the way God's government must work than perhaps any other cause!

Here are some of the reasons we all must seriously consider a lecture on this topic.

- A. God's government is different from man's governments, no matter what their types. When we learned in school how the government of our country works, we learned nothing of God's government. We must therefore be taught about it. See John 8:23 and 18:36 -- Christ stressed that He was not of this world, nor is His government like this world's, nor from it.
- B. You must work within God's government, since you are a leader in it. To smoothly and harmoniously work within it, you must know how it is to operate. Otherwise you will frustrate yourself and others.
- C. You influence others by it, since, again, you are a leader in the Church. Since God's people will be affected by how you operate, you must be sure you are operating correctly.
- D. You are a representative of it. This means that both those in the Church and outside of it will learn about God and His government by seeing you. How can you represent it correctly unless you understand it in every detail?
- E. You must be able to teach it. Obviously, many sermons, sermonettes, Bible studies and counselings touch directly or indirectly on God's government.

IV. One Possible Definition of Government is "the System by Which the Common Affairs of the People Are Guided"

- A. Those in this world mostly separate their religious life from matters of civil government. They give God a small nitch in their lives, probably on one day of the week. In fact, the United States government prides itself on the fact that church and state are separated fully.
- B. But God's government defines a total way of life. It therefore impacts everything that we do. Numerous scriptures show it is a way of living. See Acts 9:2, 18:26, 19:23, 24:14.
- C. We must constantly bear this truth in mind -- that God's government is all-encompassing -- as we study

- H. Verses such as I Timothy 5:17 and I Corinthians 5:1-5 prove that God has given the ministry authority to govern and not merely to preach truth without being able to enforce it within the Church.
- I. Hence we see that the Church is governed through its officers, the ministry, according to their individual ranks and functions, under the direction of Jesus Christ, who Himself is subject to God the Father.
- J. But of supreme importance are two remaining questions regarding proper government in the Church.
 - 1. Who appoints the ministers in the Church and how?
 - 2. Since the leaders of the Church are appointed and not elected, who keeps the leaders on track and guides their actions to ensure they remain steadfast?
- K. To begin with the first question, ministers are appointed to their posts and ordained to their ranks by the Church, through the other ministers who are already ordained. This is in accordance with clear biblical directives.
 - 1. Christ told His disciples that they had not chosen Him, but that He had chosen them (John 15:16).
 - 2. They were not voted in nor did they volunteer.
 - 3. Further, the apostles were commanded by God to ordain others (Acts 13:1-3), and Paul directed that qualified men be ordained (Titus 1:5).
- L. This process of ordination is not capricious, at the whim of either the individual who does the ordination or the one to be ordained.
 - 1. The person considered for ordination must first meet the qualifications of the position, as described in I Timothy 3:1-7.
 - 2. In addition, proof must exist that he is called to the job by God. That proof must be found in the form of the fruits of his life, which exhibit themselves to the existing ministry of the Church (Matthew 7:15-16).
 - 3. These important decisions may be accompanied by much prayer and fasting (Acts 13:3).
- M. As can be seen, the office of the ministry is not something for which one can volunteer or something one can choose for himself in the traditional sense.

- N. Because ministers are appointed by those above them in the chain of authority, one might wonder how the chief minister of the Church, the pastor general, is chosen, and by whom.
1. The pastor general, after prayer and wise counsel, may himself designate a qualified successor.
 2. Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach has sealed the designation of his successor within an envelope which has the signatures of the Council of Elders across the seal. It is kept in the Church's safe. The identity of Mr. Tkach's designated successor is unknown to the Council of Elders. The envelope is to be opened and his identity revealed only upon the death or disability of Mr. Tkach. The designation is, of course, subject to Mr. Tkach's review and revision at any time.
 3. If the pastor general dies or becomes disabled without having appointed a successor, the Advisory Council of Elders in the Church would designate a successor according to God's will after prayer.
- O. It must be stressed that God chooses the man appointed to the job of pastor general. The individual did not choose himself. It is not something for which a man can volunteer. Neither is it the choice of the man or men who may appoint him, although they might be used as human agents to discover God's will and then implement it. The choice is God's.
- P. God places each member of the Church into whatever responsibility in the Church pleases Him (I Corinthians 12:18).
- Q. All that has been said thus far about government in the Church highlights the need to understand the second question posed above: Since Church leaders are appointed and not voted into office, and since, therefore, the members are not watchdogs over the leaders, who is responsible for keeping these leaders on track spiritually and administratively?
1. The answer is that God's government in His Church is a government of faith. Simply put, this means members believe that behind the physical, outward appearance of the Church, is the unseen hand of Jesus Christ, who directs its affairs.
 2. True Christians today trust Christ to direct the Church, bless it, correct it or its officers if need be and steer its general course.

3. From the time of Moses and the rebellion of Korah (a leader in the congregation who was killed by God for insubordination -- Numbers 16), through the age of the apostles and the rejection of Judas Iscariot from his apostleship, to the present day, Christ has demonstrated His ability to:
 - a. run His Church,
 - b. place capable men in their proper positions,
 - c. discipline those who need it,
 - d. and reject from His Church those unfit to wear the Christian mantle.
4. The very existence of the Church and the Church's continuing vitality proves this beyond dispute!

V. Key Verses

Here are a some important scriptures to specially note:

- A. Ephesians 1:22, 5:23 -- Christ is the Head of the Church.
- B. Ephesians 2:19-20 -- the foundation of Church government is key men upon the cornerstone of Jesus Christ.
- C. Ephesians 4:11 and I Corinthians 12:28 -- offices of the ministry are listed in terms of rank.
- D. I Corinthians 5:1-5 and I Timothy 5:17 -- ministers have authority to rule.
- E. Acts 13:1-3, Titus 1:5, I Timothy 3:1-7 -- ministers are appointed by God's will according to their qualifications.
- F. I Corinthians 12:7-10,18 -- Christ places men into various offices as it pleases Him.

VI. Conclusion

Yes, though men through the millennia have struggled to form effective governments for their nations, they have left virtually unnoticed the question of proper church government. But God has not neglected His Church, and has put within it the cornerstone of His Son Jesus, and the foundation of those He has called to serve as leaders in His Church with power and vigor.



UPDATED
VERSION
2/87

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Lecture 1

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this topic, so we can grasp the full import of it in our lives.

V. God's Government Now, Compared to God's Government in the Millennium

It must be stressed that the subject of how God's government will work in the world tomorrow is a different topic from the one being discussed here. We are examining how God's government should function in the Church -- specifically how it must function in the local church area now, in today's world.

- A. In this age Christians should be "in" the world but not "of" it (John 17:11-16). This means, in other words, that our body is here in this world, but our mind and our thoughts are not.
- B. In the Millennium God's government will be set up here officially, and hence mankind will be both "in" and "of" that world -- God's world.
- C. Therefore, we are now only talking about the place where Christ's government now exists -- the Church.

VI. The Offices of Authority in God's Government

Every government governs through its officers. Officers are persons charged with the authority and responsibilities necessary to implement the government. It is good to review what these offices are so we can properly respect and obey those who have the rule over us (Hebrews 13:17).

A. God the Father

The supreme commander of the universe. Christ flatly stated that the Father is greater than He (John 14:28). When we compare verses like John 14:9-11 and John 10:30 with a scripture like I Corinthians 15:27, we see that God is not greater in type (they are both God), but in rank or office.

B. Jesus Christ

The head of all things to the Church (Ephesians 1:19-22, 5:23, Matthew 16:19). These verses prove that the statement that "Christ is the head of the Church" is a literal and living fact, and not merely a platitude.

C. The Apostles

From the beginning of the Church, the apostles have held a rank superior to the other ranks of ministry.

Apostles are, after Christ and with the prophets, the very foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20). I Corinthians 12:28 -- notice that apostles are "first" -- i.e., superior in rank.

D. The Ministry in General

After apostles, we have the other various ranks of ministry. In accordance with the lists given in I Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-12 and other verses, the Church has established the following offices:


1. Evangelist -- Traditionally the number holding this rank has been small. Often those holding this rank have been ministers for many years and have had broad experience. Many ordained as evangelists hold jobs that require them to supervise numerous other ministers or head an administrative department of some size.
2. Pastor -- Typically, a pastor-rank minister (to be distinguished from "church pastor," who may or may not be of pastor rank) is a minister of greater experience or responsibility than average.
3. Preaching Elder -- This is the rank eventually held by most church pastors. A man should be able to preach publicly. One who is of this rank is considered a "full minister" in that he may fulfill all of the obligations normally required of a minister without direct supervision.
4. Local Elder -- This refers to the first rank of elder, or minister, employed by the Church on salary. In recent years men have usually been ordained to local elders as their first rank of ordination, although they may later be ordained higher.
5. Local Church Elder -- This is similar to a local elder but refers to a local elder not employed by the Church on salary (Titus 1:5). It is an office of service to one's local church under the authority of the pastor.
6. Deacon and Deaconess -- Although not an office of the ministry, deacons and deaconesses are an important part of Church government. Their office is one of dignity and should be accompanied by spiritual maturity. The office is instituted in Acts 6:1-4. Qualifications for the office are found in I Timothy 3:8-13. Acts 6:1-4 makes plain their responsibilities are mainly in areas of temporal (physical) service.

7. I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-12 mention the office of "prophet." Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong stated that the office of a New Testament prophet is to reveal a message from God to an apostle. See, for example, Acts 21:10-11. Since no one has fulfilled this role in this era of the Church, none have been recognized.

E. Conclusions Regarding Rank

It is plain from the Bible that God is the author of rank, and that rank means an order of descending authority and responsibility. The teachings of some churches that all ministers are of equal authority is simply not biblical. On the other hand, it is quite plain from numerous scriptures that God's ministers should not "exercise lordship" in a condescending or high-handed manner over each other, but should love one another in a spirit of humility (Matthew 20:25-28).

They should be helpers of the brethren's joy and thus be gentle, patient, kind and understanding. They should follow Christ's example: "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench" (Matthew 12:20, New King James).



In recent months, Mr. Joseph W. Tkach and Mr. Larry Salyer have repeatedly stressed that the ministry must deal tenderly with God's children. We in Christ's service must not fail to give diligent heed to these important directives. These instructions should set the tone of our job as ministers.

F. How Ministers Are Chosen

Governments of this world choose their officers by improper means, such as through voting, grasping power through force, showing favoritism or returning political favors. In the case of churches of this world, many allow their ministers to choose the ministry as a mere career, as one would choose to be a plumber or carpenter. Ministers in the true Church are (chosen by God) (Hebrews 5:1-4, John 15:16) by making their fruits and calling obvious to those already in authority (I Timothy 3:1-7).

Ministers are ordained into service through the laying on of hands by ministers of superior rank. This ceremony shows the submission of the newly-ordained to God's government, as well as the two-way bond of respect, humility and love among God's entire family of ministers. It also reminds us of the extra measure of God's Spirit He gives us as we serve Him (I Timothy 4:14).

