

## Government, God's way

Governments are needed in a nation for several reasons. One of which is to enforce law and order. Related to that is the need to have a military force when war is necessary to combat evil nations. Another reason for government is to help coordinate and manage the general affairs of the people. How much of that, and of what kind is needed depends upon several things. For example, the creation and maintenance of an infrastructure is vital to a well developed nation, and that is most effectively managed by the government.

For most other things, the more righteous the people are the less government is needed. A righteous people would manage themselves well. Our great industrial corporations manage themselves without the need for government intervention, unless those corporations begin to be oppressive, either to their employees or to the environment.

The more spiritually corrupt a people become, the more they need to be controlled by their government. As Solomon said, **“For the transgression of a land many are the rulers of it. But by men of understanding and knowledge the state shall be prolonged”** (Proverbs 28:2). That explains why, when America forsook God and became pagan, that began the explosive growth of the ruling bureaucracies we now have.

In his holy book, the Bible, God has given few instructions about governments. Most of them are about who should lead the people, and what kind of men they should be, as in the above proverb. Therefore, America, God's way has great liberty from God to create and maintain the kind of government we want. Nevertheless, we can still learn much about government from the example of God's former people Israel.

### The rulers of ancient Israel

#### *Judges*

God's people the sons of Israel were ruled by judges, under the kingship of Jehovah God. Indeed, the first book in the Bible following the one about Joshua, which tells about the conquest of their promise land, is the book of Judges. That way of government for them began during the time of Moses.

Here is that story: **“And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning to the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou do to the people? Why do thou sit by thyself, and all the people stand about thee from morning to evening? And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a matter, they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor. And I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.**

**“And Moses’ father-in-law said to him, The thing that thou do is not good. Thou will surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee, for the thing is too heavy for thee. Thou are not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now to my voice. I will give thee counsel, and God be with thee. Be thou for the people toward God, and bring thou the cases to God. And thou shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and shall show them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain, and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens, and let them judge the people at all seasons. And it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring to thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves.**

**“So shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shall do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shall be able to endure, and all this people also shall go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens, and they judged the people at all seasons. The hard cases they brought to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. And Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land”** (Exodus 18:13-27).

That hierarchical system of rulers he recommended is very similar to the organizational leadership of a typical modern army, which works very well. Actually, the sons of Israel were an army on their way to invade the promised land. Indeed, Jehovah referred to their tribes as his armies, and they were often called armies in various passages of the Bible about their time in the wilderness.

The extent to which that system of rulers remained after they settled in their promised land is not known. Since they were divided into the various tribal territories each tribe probably established its own system of judges and rulers.

Actually, the government of Israel was to be very simple. Their country was to be a theocracy with Jehovah as their king. And he used his agents and prophets to communicate with them. They had no need for legislators, for Moses had been their lawgiver. After they settled in their promised land they initially had one chief man to judge and advise them (one of those judges was a woman). Thus, they had a lot of freedom, as the record says: **“In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes”** (Judges 17:6). That did not mean they were lawless. It simply meant they were free from the dictates of a central government.

However, they eventually did ask God to set an earthly king over them. Consequently, they lost much of their freedom to their kings, many of whom were unrighteous men. Their various administrators had traditionally been the local elder men among them.

The law God gave them through Moses did command judges and officers be made in all their gates, meaning in all their walled cities. Those walled cities were larger population centers with the greater need for some kind of management. The command says, **“Thou shall make judges and officers for thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God gives thee, according to thy tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment”** (Deuteronomy 16:18).

Those men were apparently chosen primarily by and from the elder men. However, they probably also included Levites. For in the command about unsolved murders, the text says, **“And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near, for Jehovah thy God has chosen them to minister to him, and to bless in the name of Jehovah, and according to their word shall every controversy and every stroke be”** (Deuteronomy 21:5). The (high) priests apparently had authority over every judgment.

Jehovah also established something like a supreme court for them. The law says, **“If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates, then thou shall arise, and get thee up to the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose. And thou shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days, and thou shall inquire. And they shall show thee the sentence of judgment”** (Deuteronomy 17:8-9).

Jehovah commanded them to accept the decision made by the priest and the judge at the chosen place. He said they were not to alter it in any way. And any man who refused to hearken to the judgment of the priest or the judge was to be put to death. And again he said if they did that the people would hear and fear, and would **“do no more presumptuously”** (Deuteronomy 17:13).

### *Choosing to have a king*

Eventually the people decided they wanted to be like the Gentile nations and have a king for themselves. The prophet Samuel was judge at the time, and when he told Jehovah what the people asked for, the record says, **“And Jehovah said to Samuel, Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also to thee.**

**“Now therefore hearken to their voice. However thou shall protest solemnly to them, and shall show them the manner of the king who shall reign over them.**

**“And Samuel told all the words of Jehovah to the people who asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king who shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them to him for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and they shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint them to him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties. And he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks.**

**“And ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you, and Jehovah will not answer you in that day”** (First Samuel 8:7-18).

Nevertheless, the people still wanted a king. So from that time on, until they were conquered and scattered among other nations, they were ruled by kings, some of whom were very evil.

### **The rulers of America, God's way**

Although our constitution is based upon the values of humanism, our government began as a constitutional republic, not a democracy. The growing dominance of humanism in the hearts of the people is primarily responsible for America becoming a democracy. And the consequences of it have not been good. Our rulers are now selected from a spiritually inferior class of people. Money and popularity, not wisdom and righteousness, are now the chief criteria for being elected.

#### *Elder men only*

According to the principles and examples from God's word, the Bible, our rulers should be chosen from older Christian men who have proven themselves to be both the wisest and the most righteous. Moreover, they should be chosen only by other Christian men who have earned the right to vote.

Since God set the age of the priests who would serve him to the range thirty to fifty years, that suggests only men between the ages of thirty and fifty years old should be chosen. Although with the much greater standards of health now, perhaps the upper age should be something like sixty years of age.

Moreover, only Christian men who are at least thirty years of age should have the right to vote. Voting for the rulers of America, God's way, should be a distinct privilege earned by educated, talented, and faithful Christian men. That would virtually guarantee the best men would

become our rulers. Not the most charming and popular personalities that are now selected.

### *A attitude of serving*

Two of Jesus' apostles once asked him to sit one at his right hand and one at his left hand in his kingdom. When the other apostles heard of it, they became indignant toward those two men. Jesus then said to them, **"Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord over them, and their eminent men have power over them. But it shall not be so among you. Rather whoever wants to become great among you, he shall be your helper, and whoever wants be first among you shall be your bondman. Just as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"** (Matthew 20:25-28).

Therefore, the rulers of America, God's way, must be chosen from elder Christian men with an attitude of heart to serve, not to gain power. And that attitude must be demonstrated in the record of their lives. Only such men should be chosen to be our rulers, if we are going to be America, God's way.

## Enforcement

Governments are useless without its rulers having the power to enforce their will and their laws. The apostle Paul commanded us to be subject to offices of authority, when he said, **"Let every soul be subject to offices of authority that rank higher. For there is no office of authority if not by God, and the offices of authority that are by God are those that have been instituted. So that he who resists the office of authority has opposed the ordinance of God, and those who have opposed will receive condemnation to themselves. For rulers are not a source of fear to the good works, but to the evil. And do thou desire not to fear the office of authority? Do what is good, and thou will have praise from it. For he is a helper of God to thee for what is good.**

**"But if thou do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is a helper of God, vengeful for wrath to the man who commits evil. Therefore there is a need to be subordinate, not only because of the wrath, but also because of the conscience"** (Romans 13:1-5).

The second sentence in that passage has been mistranslated for centuries. Other translations say there is no office of authority (or power) except (or but) by God. That makes it sound as if Paul is saying every office of authority is by God, but that is not true.

The more literal and accurate translation says, **"For there is no office of authority *if not* by God, and the offices of authority that are by God are those that have been instituted"** (italics are mine). Only those offices of authority are by God if they oppose evil and promote righteousness.

Those that do oppose evil and promote righteousness have his support to bear the sword (or any other weapon) to be **“vengeful for wrath to the man who commits evil.”** Indeed, Paul said they were God’s helpers for that purpose. Paul also said, **“If possible from you, keeping peace with all men, not avenging yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is for me, I will repay, says the Lord”** (Romans 12:18-19). Offices of authority (like police forces) serve God when they apply God’s vengeance against evil doers. Therefore, we must be subordinate to them.

### *Punishments*

There was a law among those that God gave to his people Israel that told of capital punishment for whoever would not submit to the judgment of the highest court, which involved either the high priest or the chief judge of the land. It says,

**If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates, then thou shalt arise, and get thee up to the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose. And thou shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days, and thou shall inquire. And they shall show thee the sentence of judgment.**

**And thou shall do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show thee from that place which Jehovah shall choose. And thou shall observe to do according to all that they shall teach thee, according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shall do. Thou shall not turn aside from the sentence, which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.**

**And the man who does presumptuously, in not hearkening to the priest who stands to minister there before Jehovah thy God, or to the judge, even that man shall die, and thou shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously”** (Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

There was another law that was apparently about frequent offenders. It says, **“Ye shall have one law for him who does anything unwittingly, for him who is home-born among the sons of Israel, and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the soul that does anything with a high hand, whether he be home-born or a sojourner, the same blasphemeth Jehovah, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of Jehovah, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him”** (Numbers 15:29-31).

Sinning with a high hand apparently refers to career criminals. And being utterly cut off clearly refers to capital punishment. If career criminals

were executed (swiftly) as God commanded his people Israel, crimes in American, God's way would be very few indeed.

## **Taxes**

Paul also said about offices of authority, **“For because of this ye also fulfill taxes, for they are servants of God being devoted to this same thing. Render therefore to all, the things due: tax to the man of tax, tribute to the man of tribute, fear to the man of fear, esteem to the man of esteem”** (Romans 13:6-7).

### *Tithing for the Israelites*

The tax system that God gave his people Israel was the tithe. There were actually three tithes mentioned in the law. One of them mentioned giving ten percent, of whatever were their financial gains for that year, to the priesthood: **“And to the sons of Levi [the priests], behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the tent of meeting”** (Numbers 18:21).

A second tithe was for themselves and those with them to use when they held their three annual feasts at Jerusalem: **“Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed; that which comes forth from the field year by year. And thou shalt eat before Jehovah thy God, in the place which he shall choose to cause his name to dwell there, the tithe of thy grain, of thy new wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herd and of thy flock, that thou may learn to fear Jehovah thy God always”** (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).

A third law about tithing says, **“At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase in the same year, and shall lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the sojourner, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied, that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou do”** (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). That triennial tithe was for the benefit of the poor and deprived among them.

Regarding the Church, it was never commanded to tithe. Voluntary contributions are its only source of financial aide.