

1. The State

The Old and New Testaments recognize legitimate institutions of leadership under varied conditions and implementations which we shall refer to as "The State". Any collective enterprise requires cohesion, direction, and agreed upon rules for success. This implies the need for leadership. This is true of small undertakings as well as larger societal initiatives. We do not know what this would have looked like in a perfect world. But we do know what it should/does look like in an evil world.

Genesis 9:4-6 appears to be God's instituting a larger human framework of government beyond family and clan. It is God's common grace to preserve the social order from its previous experience of not just personal corruption (Gen 6:5-6) but from aggressive strong-men (Gen 6:4; e.g. Hitler, Stalin) and the resulting violence (Gen 6:10-11) they brought upon the earth.

Scripture, especially Proverbs, demonstrates that social organization under kings and rulers is a result of divine sovereignty operating in the earth (Act 17:26). It is designed to be a blessing from God for the human race in general.

As Christians we must acknowledge and appreciate these institutions as having their origin ultimately in God, not human ingenuity.

a. General

Proverbs generally acknowledges human government as an absolute good; rulers are accountable to God, dependent upon God and are ultimately under His sovereign dominion. Other passages reaffirm this.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 8:15-16** "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. "By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 14:28** In a multitude of people is a king's glory, But in the dearth of people is a prince's ruin.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 17:7** Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool, Much less are lying lips to a prince.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 19:10** Luxury is not fitting for a fool; Much less for a slave to rule over princes.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 22:7** The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower *becomes* the lender's slave.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 29:26** Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man *comes* from the LORD.

^{NAU} **Psalm 2:10-12** Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

^{NAU} **Daniel 2:21** It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

^{NAU} **Daniel 4:17** "This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men."

^{NAU} **Daniel 4:34-35** "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. ³⁵ "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

^{NAU} **Acts 17:26** ... and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation ...

b. Good

Proverbs makes observations about some fundamental principles that must characterize good government.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 16:10** A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 16:13** Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And he who speaks right is loved.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 20:8** A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 20:26** A wise king winnows the wicked, And drives the *threshing* wheel over them.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 20:28** Loyalty and truth preserve the king, And he upholds his throne by righteousness.

^{NAU} **Proverbs 29:14** If a king judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever.

c. Bad

Proverbs makes observations about some fundamental dynamics that unfortunately, all too often, characterize bad government.

NAU **Proverbs 16:12** It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, For a throne is established on righteousness.

NAU **Proverbs 28:15** Like a roaring lion and a rushing bear Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

NAU **Proverbs 29:12** If a ruler pays attention to falsehood, All his ministers *become* wicked.

d. Either

Proverbs makes observations about good and bad government by way of comparison

NAU **Proverbs 14:34** Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.

NAU **Proverbs 25:5** Take away the wicked before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.

NAU **Proverbs 29:4** The king gives stability to the land by justice, But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.

e. Impact

Proverbs captures, in general but pointed terms, the impact of government on a population.

NAU **Proverbs 11:10** When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.

NAU **Proverbs 29:2** When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan.

f. Interaction

Proverbs makes observations about how to interact with rulers and governments. They have immense power to do good or harm. Unnecessarily provoking them is a fool's errand that can bring dire consequences.

NAU **Proverbs 14:35** The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.

NAU **Proverbs 16:14** The fury of a king is *like* messengers of death, But a wise man will appease it.

NAU **Proverbs 16:15** In the light of a king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain.

NAU **Proverbs 19:12** The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, But his favor is like dew on the grass.

NAU **Proverbs 20:2** The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.

NAU **Proverbs 24:21** My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those who are given to change, ²² For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin *that comes* from both of them?

NAU **Proverbs 25:6** Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men; ⁷ For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen.

NAU **Proverbs 25:15** By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft tongue breaks the bone.

g. New Testament

The New Testament continues this message of the legitimacy and purpose of current human government. As Christians we are to submit to them in all their worldliness and imperfections (unless it is contrary to God's commandments - TBD later). Extrapolating this material into elaborate theories of human government misses the point of these passages. Criticizing, redefining or reconstructing human government is simply not the mission of the church. These passages are here for us to align our life with as we pursue our true mission of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations, beginning with the one we live in.

NAU **Matthew 17:25** He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" ²⁶ When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt. ²⁷ "However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

NAU **Matthew 22:15** Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. ¹⁷ "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ "Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." ²² And hearing *this*, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

^{NAU} **Romans 13:1** Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

^{NAU} **Titus 3:1** Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ² to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

^{NAU} **1 Peter 2:13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bond slaves of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

h. Prophetic

In the bigger picture of the kingdom of God and the eternal purposes of God, human government, in all of its manifestations, is represented as being humanistic (666; Dan 3:1; Rev 13:18) and arrayed against God. Through history, human governments and economic institutions have regularly persecuted the people of God. As history moves forward to the 2nd coming of Christ, human government will grow in its opposition to and persecution of the people of God (Rev 11:7; 16:12-16; 17:13-14; 20:7-10). All human governments will ultimately be replaced by the reign of God in Christ in a New heavens and earth. However, we must not use this anti-Christian alignment on the part of human government as an excuse or rationale to not submit to them as outlined in the New Testament.

^{NAU} **Psalms 22:27** All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations will worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. ³⁰ Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the *coming* generation. ³¹ They will come and will declare His righteousness To a people who will be born, that He has performed *it*.

^{NAU} **Daniel 7:1-14** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as *he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it. ² Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were

stirring up the great sea. ³ "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. ⁴ "The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. ⁵ "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' ⁶ "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ "While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*. ⁹ "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. ¹⁰ "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened. ¹¹ "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. ¹² "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. ¹³ "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 2:1** The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 30:27-28** Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is *His* smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire; ²⁸ His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to *put* in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.

^{NAU} **Daniel 2:31-45** "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. ³² "The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of

clay. ³⁴ "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. ³⁷ "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. ³⁹ "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. ⁴¹ "In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴² "As the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. ⁴³ "And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. ⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

NAU **Daniel 3:1-8** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ² Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ³ Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language, ⁵ that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. ⁶ "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." ⁷ Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ⁸ For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

NAU **Haggai 2:6-7** "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. ⁷ 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

^{NAU} **Haggai 2:21-22** "Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. ²² 'I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.'

^{NAU} **Hebrews 12:26-29** And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." ²⁷ This *expression*, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

^{NAU} **Revelation 13:1-18** And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns *were* ten diadems, and on his heads *were* blasphemous names. ² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like *those* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. ³ *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast; ⁴ they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" ⁵ There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. ⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone *is destined* for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. ¹¹ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. ¹² He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. ¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. ¹⁵ And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, ¹⁷ and *he provides* that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.