

## The Lord Jesus said ... “My Sheep

*sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man”* (Genesis 9:6).

A man could kill animals, but not another man. Because God created man in His own image, when a man committed murder, man *himself* was given the authority to execute capital punishment. This was to protect the image of God on earth. And this was the extent of what God had instructed for human government.

It is Genesis 10-11 which records the first attempt of man to organize his own government. Rather than scatter into smaller dependent groups, man organized a big independent unity. In the establishment of the “kingdom of Babel,” several of *man’s* enduring purposes of government are revealed or implied.

**a. To facilitate man’s ability.** “*Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly”* (Gen 11:3). They discovered the ability to build on a grand scale and so used it. This would give a sense of purpose in being a part of something so “great.”

**b. To build and maintain an infrastructure** “*Go to, let us build us a city...*” (Gen.11:4). Big cities like Babel have big purpose. They pool man’s talents and resources together. With their bridges, roads, and buildings, they allow for easy trade which makes their economy grow. Together, people would specialize in different areas of work and depend on one another to meet their needs and “improve the quality of living.”

**c. To establish and maintain a name.** “*Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”* (Gen. 11:4). A high tower would be a rallying point and a symbol of man’s strength. A “name” is associated with glory and authority. This “name” would keep the people of the kingdom of Babel unified and patriotic. (But this name was unto man, and not God.)

**Far from what God instructed, Babel’s government became what men would depend on for survival, sustenance and purpose.**

## hear my voice, and

A Babel mindset in government provides citizens “security” and purpose through *government’s* provisions and job markets. It organizes big trade where men are apt to depend on each other rather than God. And it instills a “national pride” (patriotism) through the government’s *name* so that when asked, men willingly die to build and defend the *name* of their government.

## Man’s Failure

Scripture records no instruction after the flood for government to give purpose, to build infrastructure, to unify, or to organize. Man was to *replenish* the earth in dependence upon God (Gen 9:1-3). God would then in time establish their national borders (Acts 17:26). But at Babel, man defiantly unified to form *one* government.

At Babel, man acted *without* instruction from God, stepping far beyond the governmental instruction God did give. God was not pleased. Their oneness (unity) was wrong because it was a unity under man, not God. God said, “*Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language ...*” (Gen 11:7). And they were judged. Their godless unity was broken and they were scattered.

Babel’s government stood opposed to God, even denying Him. God *Himself* is to be the “purpose” of a man’s life, not his trade. Man is to depend on God **alone** to meet his every need, not other men and certainly not governments’ securities and entitlements (Mat 6:31-32). And man is to glory in his Creator, never himself, his abilities, or his accomplishments (1 Cor 1:31).

The weakness of man’s governments (beginning with Babel) is clearly seen. From human monarchy to democratic republic; from socialism to fascism; all have come short of God’s simple purpose for government: righteousness. This is because at their head (whether a king or representatives) will be found man, of whom God says all have sinned and come short of His glory.

When sinful man assumes governmental authority beyond God’s instruction and massive resources are at his disposal, is it surprising that he will engage in war where men created in God’s image are destroyed?

And why? Almost never for the scriptural reason of bearing the sword against them that “doeth evil” (Rom 13:1-4). Other reasons will liberally be given: freedom, rights, land for citizens, resources for the economy, etc. But isn’t war almost always the result of man’s hunger

## they follow me ... .” John 10:27

to expand his borders? With divine direction forsaken, is it any surprise that history bears out such brutal folly?

## God’s Future Government

From the time of Babel onward, God has allowed men to form nations: to grope about blindly, as it were, without any divine instruction for what type of government to form (Israel excepted). In every one of them, there was failure because men’s confidence and hope was in man. (Even Israel eventually rejected God as their Head and turned to man, 1Sam 11:3; 12:12). And with every failure, men devised something new. Now, after millennia with so many failures, isn’t the data in?

**Man can’t govern himself, because a man can’t govern himself. As long as the head is sinful man, a government will fail. The only question is when.**

So then, what hope is there for earth? There is “a last best hope.” The day is coming when there will finally be a sinless leader of the world: a man – the Lord Jesus Christ. “... *With righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity”* (Psalms 98:9).

The King of kings and Lord of lords is unlike any ruler who has ever been. He alone is a man without sin. But that’s not all. Being God, He is omniscient, knowing every individual *personally*.

Modern day politicians would never dream of such a thing. They study demographics, political science and economics which model nations as collective units, not collective units of *individuals*. They must deal with “the whole” because they could not possibly deal with the “all.” And since they can’t know *all the people*, they could never hope to serve *all* the people well.

What a glorious day it will be for the nations in the new heavens and earth – to have a leader who is not only sinless and selfless, but one who will meet every *individual’s* needs. *All* “the people” will be secure, unified, and *dependent* on a righteous leader. And *He* will be their purpose. And they will glory in His name alone! In that day, God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). God’s purpose of the ages will be fulfilled (Eph 1:10). It will

## “... Praise and extol and honour

not be, “of the people, by the people, for the people” – but, “of Him, and through Him, and to Him” (Rom.11:36).

## God’s Present Government

Let us now consider the New Testament church and how the errors of Babel are affecting its government.

- 1. The Purpose of the Church**
- 2. The Head of the Church**
- 3. The “Leaders” of the Church**
- 4. The People of the Church**

### **The Purpose of the Church**

When the first civil government was formed at Babel man went well beyond God’s instruction and purpose. This Babel-like urge to go beyond God’s instruction must be resisted in the church today.

- Is our hope in the *church* to give purpose in life through its many programs and ministries or is our hope in the Lord? “*But our sufficiency is of God”* (2Cor 3:5).
- Was the church instructed to be strong with political authority or maintain assets (infrastructure) in order to *insure* security in meeting peoples’ needs? “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:19, Mat 6:19-34).

Some Christian ministries are building great assets with the goal of meeting needs. Could they by their example and ecumenical compromises be naively fostering dependence on man and independence from God?

God gives no organizational instructions beyond the single autonomous church, and there is no precedent for church asset ownership (individual ownership, yes (Acts 5:4), but not the church). The organizations, “official ministries,” and infrastructures being built do not come from a scriptural pattern or principle. A simple look at man’s marketing and fund-raising strategies necessary to maintain such things confirm their error.

- Is the church to build up a name (Baptist, Methodist, Brethren, etc.) which will instill a unifying patriotism? This will cause many to defend their church’s organization and glory in its history and accomplishments. Colossians 3:17 says, “*whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” And, “*If any man glory, let him glory in the Lord”* (1Cor 1:31).

the King of heaven,

Many well-intentioned saints are stepping far beyond the simple instructions of God's Word for the church and right into the same errors made at Babel.

Churches often advertise to attract and keep people (as a business might try to win market-share). Often seen is a boasting of entitlements offered: counselling, "user friendly" church buildings, size, church growth ministries, music, drama, and "seeker" programs (youth, singles, etc.) that produce "results" – as though "church membership" and satisfied people were the goal.

God's way to save is by the "foolishness of preaching" (1Cor. 1:21). The church, in dependence upon *Him* alone, simply proclaims His Word through continuing in the "apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." When *God* adds to the church by saving some, they are to be baptized, *then* brought into the local church fellowship (Acts 2:41-47).

The purpose of the churches is being changed today from a habitation for God where He is given His desires into a place where God is talked about, but not obeyed or depended upon. (See Chronicles of the Church of God, 1-8, for a scriptural exposition of this).

### ***The Head of the Church***

There is only *one* Head of the true church: the Lord Jesus Christ. The government of a family unit can work well because there is a head who is closely familiar with and loves every individual under his authority. So it is with the Lord Jesus and His churches (1 Pet 5:7).

He knows every individual and *all* needs. He is able to meet them through the spiritual gifts which He dispenses to whom He will (Eph 4:8). Too often it is the church leaders, not able to know every need, who take control of matters and arrange and orchestrate so much that the saints have little or no freedom to exercise their God-given gifts to edify the assembly (1 Cor 14:12;26).

Israel once won a victory despite the spoils being withheld. Jonathan said, "*How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoils of their enemies which they found? For had there not been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?*" (1Sam 14:30). Today, in His mercy, needs are still met, but how much better could they be? How much stronger spiritually might the churches be if the saints were per-

all whose works are truth,

mitted to minister as directed of the Holy Spirit in weekly open meetings - as the Head has clearly instructed (1Cor 14)?

### ***The "Leaders" of the Church***

Whom God calls shepherds, men call "leaders." This word holds with it a gross misinterpretation. The "leaders" of a church are *not* to independently lead. There is one Head of the church. The Elders are to *follow* that Head and *oversee* the assembly, not dictate their own preferences. Elders are more *discerners* of God's Word than decision makers. (See Acts 15 where the Word of God ends the argument, see Joshua 14:15; Judges 7; contrast 1Sam 14-15). Elders are to simply relay God's Word as they stand upon it. So in following the "leader," one is really following Christ (Acts 20:26-32).

A general in an army *needs* instant communication with his men and he *needs* accurate intelligence of the enemy's activity in order to direct his army. No elder in any church has either of these things. But the Head does. He can redirect any preacher a moment before he opens his mouth. He can change an evangelist's focus toward another part of a city at an instant. He can move in the heart of a giver to give where needed. He can do what no Christian "leader" ever could.

Elders are simply to oversee the sheep in the church meeting, seeing that it functions in proper *scriptural* order under the Lord's commands (1Cor. 14:37). Elders are to be teachers by word and deed of what the purpose in life is, how to depend on God, and most importantly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the preeminent One.

The elders (plural) of a church are to be overseers, hospitable, teachers, caretakers of the church of God, exhorters and convincers of the contradictors according to sound doctrine, and watchers for our souls (1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; Heb 13:17). These are their instructions.

### ***The People of the Church***

Finally, the largest part of any government is *the people*. The saints are to be obedient to the elders. The reason for this is that we are under *the* Head who commands it so (Heb 13:17). But personal obedience to the Lord must always take precedence over our submission to any man (Acts 5:29). For example, the Head says, "*Let your women keep silence in the churches...*" (1Cor 14:34). Whom do we obey if men disagree?

and His ways judgment ... ." Daniel 4:37

When we do see wrong government in the church, we must resist the urge to cause divisions and get our own following (see 1Sam 12:20-25). The Lord Jesus is the Head of His church and knows how to deal with disobedience (Rev. 2&3). The Lord allowed Saul to reign over Israel (1Sam 8-31) and David refused to rebel – even when given clear opportunity (1Sam 24 & 26). May we regard David's example of patience, understanding that there is a *Lord* who is in full control (See 1Sam 2:6-10).

**The conclusion is very simple.  
New Testament church  
government is one of utter  
dependence on an all-sufficient  
God – for everything.**

The New Testament church lacks hierarchy, but has great order (1 Cor 14). It lacks a constitution (apart from God's *entire* Word), but handles the severest of problems (e.g. 1 Cor 5). It lacks earthly heads, but nurtures loyalty to the *Lord* Jesus (Acts 20:32). It lacks man's infrastructure, yet it sees *every* need met (Acts 11:27-30).

It pays taxes, prays for leaders and obeys law, but is not dependent on government. It is "pilgrim" in nature, but has a permanent city in heaven. It is passive toward cultural change, yet resists worldly influence. It plans for little, and thereby builds faith in an all-sufficient God. It is persecuted by men, but perfectly secure in God's salvation through the King of kings.

New Testament church government is designed by God to be but a small reflection of what will one day be when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns as King over all creation and the Father's will is finally done on earth. It will be the day when "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen," never to intoxicate the nations again (Rev 18:2-3). May today's church "come out of her" and reflect His rule on Earth now (Rev 18:4).

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Chronicle #10 of 'The Church of God' series will continue to focus on God's local assembly

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The Chronicles of the  
**Church**  
of God

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## **Babel in the Church?**

Though governmental powers are ordained by God to uphold law and order for the welfare of societies (Rom 13:1-4), God has not always been pleased with what men have done (see Dan 5; Acts 12:23). Likewise with church government: though God has ordained it, He is not always pleased with what men do in it.

Because the same errors in thinking which have led to God's displeasure in secular governments are being employed in the churches, it will be helpful to examine the following points regarding government.

- 1. The Intended Purpose of Government**
- 2. Man's Failure in Government**
- 3. God's Future Earthly Government**
- 4. God's Present Church Government**

## **Purpose of Government**

It was after the flood that God gave the first governmental instruction to mankind in general: "*Whoso*