

Then Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28: 19, 20)

One Year Away - Now What?

It is now one year away from the elections of 2012 for President and many Congressional offices. Which means, if you thought you were already saturated with politics, you're in for 12 months of *you ain't seen nuthin' yet*. Unless you somehow manage to completely disconnect yourself from your cell phone, Internet, television and radio – in short, become a hermit or hunt out the same little people who Rip Van Winkle ran into – there's no escape from it.

Of course, believers shouldn't disconnect themselves from the world we are trying to engage for the Gospel. But we do have a responsibility (especially as citizens of the United States) to also engage the process, such as it is. Why, if we truly have no king but Jesus, should we care who gets into office if He's coming back very, very soon? Simple; we have been asking God for not merely revival but a new Great Awakening that will spread across both the nation and the world. The policies of whoever is elected or re-elected to office will make that task easier or more difficult. Not that it matters in the end – God can certainly overcome any and every obstacle humans throw in His path, but the effects on God's people will be quite profound either way.

So, we as believers need to be the salt and light in the world the Lord Jesus spoke of. And this means we need to keep a few things in mind:

- **Without a foundation in Scripture, neither political party is adequate to the task.** Politics is but one part of a person's life; perhaps big, perhaps small, but still only a part. And while much has been said about what the political parties in this nation support, without the guiding (or restraining) hand of the Lord in such matters, any party – Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, etc. – can fall down the slippery slope to disaster because left to their own wills political parties ultimately want power. This is an illusion, because all power belongs to God and He lets people utilize it at His discretion, for His purposes. A better term for this, perhaps, is *authority* – exercising power on behalf of someone with a greater degree of it than yourself. (Think of the Book of Genesis, where Joseph was made second-in-command in Egypt by Pharaoh.) Without that knowledge that God is the One who is ultimately running things, even the most well-intentioned people or groups can derail. In the 1960s, the Democratic Party became identified with the Civil Rights movement. This was a good thing, as laws protecting people from discrimination based on race, religion, gender, etc. were (sadly) necessary. But there is a difference between protecting the rights of minorities to active oppression of the majority; the latter is the road the

party hierarchy now travels, particularly in areas of faith. Believers who once were seen as a stabilizing influence on society as envisioned by the Founding Fathers are now actively being pushed away from the national dialogue. Likewise, the Republican Party, once viewed as defending the freedoms for the individual provided for in the U.S. Constitution, is increasingly viewed as beholden to the wealthy and those only interested in a profit at the expense of the poor, the minorities and the environment to the point where restriction of those freedoms may be necessary in order to preserve the nation. Without the influence of the Lord in the lives of individuals, one path leads to anarchy and the other to tyranny.

- **What does the candidate believe; is the Word of God in the heart, or just on the lips?** The idea that a person's beliefs can be separated from their public conduct is a fallacy; *as (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV, emphasis mine). What a person supports or opposes, what actions the person will or will not take, all are based on the person's core beliefs. Like marriage vows, the oath taken before assuming elected office is made before God; we as believers simply have forgotten that or we have become so accustomed to repeated violations of that oath that we simply shrug our shoulders and say, *Politicians - go figure...* Either that, or we are perfectly willing to overlook those same faults when it's "our guy" (or girl). I say, *Enough!* I cannot (and would not even if I could) propose a "litmus test" of belief as a condition for election. But I once believed that I would rather have a politician who knows which side of his bread the butter goes on, rather than someone who spreads it on the wrong side, lets it fall to the table and make a big mess (then insists it's supposed to be this way) as the second-best choice if you can't get a believer in that office. I personally, officially (and publicly) repent of this "good enough" philosophy and will now insist on sincere, open and honest belief in God the Father, the Lord Yeshua (Jesus) as His Son and the workings of the Holy Spirit if a candidate wants my support - especially if that candidate comes seeking the support of my fellow-believers. If one isn't readily apparent or available, then I will ask the Lord for and believe Him to send someone into that task. Our nation is in an increasingly precarious state before God, and (as Oswald Chambers said) the "good" is the enemy of the "best" that God wants us to have. If a candidate comes "talking the talk," that person better be "walking the walk" to the best of his or her capability.
- **First things first.** 2 Chronicles 7:14 reads, "If My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (NIV). Jesus confirms this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:33): "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Important as the world thinks it is, politics is not the primary focus of life. For the believer, the Kingdom has first priority because we will be citizens of the Kingdom longer than we ever will be of the nations we come out of, including the United States. But if we put His Kingdom first, then God will give healing to the nations we live in as well.

Take care of business with the Lord first -- then take the time to study the candidates and let Him guide you over which candidates to vote for, and not just for

the White House. Congress and the state and local governments are also given to us by God and need us to seek His direction just as much as the Presidency. It is the Word of God that politicians and political parties must adapt themselves to, and not vice-versa, and unless this occurs, I am afraid for the future of my country.

For the Glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ
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