

Genesis 9:1-6

Why Human Government?

People's respect for laws and government officials has really been on a down hill slide for years, not only in our own country but around the world. As of last week the congressional approval rating was right around 17%.

There are plenty of people who view laws as unimportant. They are for the other guy, not for me.

Policemen, government officials, teachers, parents, are all the bad guys. According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2006, 78 percent of our schools experienced one or more violent incidents of crime.

Our society has, in many ways, lost its respect for government. But we need to ask ourselves where do Christians stand as far as their relationship to the government? Where did human government come from in the first place, and what authority if any, does it have over those of us who are citizens of heaven?

We're studying the book of Genesis which is a book of beginnings. It is a book of origins.

So far we've seen the origin of the universe, the solar system, the atmosphere, life, man, marriage, and a whole host other things. The message of Genesis is that none of those things arose spontaneously.

Everyone of them had their origin in God. Life didn't just happen, God created it. Humans didn't evolve, God made them. Marriage isn't just some human invention that's whatever any culture wants to make it. It was ordained by God the creator.

Today we've come to Genesis chapter 9 and today we're going to see what happened immediately after the great flood. We're going to see another first. Another origin.

Open your Bibles to Genesis 9

In a sense this is a lot like it was in the original creation. It is a new beginning for mankind. On the other hand there are some distinct differences which God ordained to be carried out.

Chapter 9 begins with a statement that sounds very similar to Genesis 1:28 after the creation of man and woman.

Read verse 1

I. God Commands Noah And His Sons To Repopulate The Earth

In the beginning there was just two people, Adam and Eve. And God commanded them to have children and to begin the process of populating the earth.

Now after the destruction of a world wide flood, the earth is reduced down to 8 people.

Noah, his wife, his 3 sons Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives.

Again, God tells humans to populate the earth. It always was God's plan for the earth to be populated. His plan was that human beings should exercise proper dominion over the earth, under His sovereignty.

Today there's about 6.7 billion people on the planet. I know we hear a lot about over population but the truth is we haven't even scratched the surface of most of the world's potential to raise food. It's just been hindered by man's selfishness, his lust for power and domination. Nations fight and war rather than using their money and technology to care for people. The people who are the poorest get caught in the middle.

God said be fruitful and He hasn't rescinded that order.

We see God marking this new start by blessing Noah and his sons. When God blesses He doesn't just wish people well, but He imparts good.

God's holiness and hatred for sin was absolutely clear. There was no debate. He had judged the sin of the world through the flood. And now He's still at work. Everything is moving under his sovereign grace. God is with them in their new beginning and His presence with them is blessing.

It's interesting but God never told Noah to get in the ark. Back in chapter 7:1 the Bible says, *Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household."* God said, "Join me guys, I'll personally be with you as you navigate through the

waters of judgment. That same God was promising to be with them in their new life that was beginning now.

The specific command to have dominion over the earth and to subdue it that God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 is omitted here. Fallen man no longer had the capacity to subdue the earth. The whole earth was corrupted through the fall of man.

Not until Jesus returns and sets up the kingdom will we be able to really have dominion over the earth in its truest sense.

But, verse 2 shows that things were obviously different than they were in the original creation.

Verse 2

God had given Adam dominion over all the animal creation. But man had fallen hard and creation was changed. Now God assures Noah that He'll protect him by putting fear and dread of man into the wilder animals.

I. God Commands Noah And His Sons To Repopulate The Earth

II. God Gives Permission To Eat Meat

Verse 3

Now humanities' power over the animal world is expanded in another direction. An animal diet is permitted.

If men before the flood ever ate the meat of animals they did it in violation of God's command.

Years ago before I really knew anything about the Bible I worked for a while in a vegetarian restaurant in Los Angeles. It was kind of a trendy place. Some pretty famous people like the Rolling Stones would eat there.

Well, in the kitchen, posted on a set of cabinets was a quote from Genesis 1:29. *And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."*

And I said to myself “Hey, what do you know, God doesn’t want people to eat meat.”

Well what they didn’t post on the cabinet was Genesis 9:3. After the flood there were some major changes and one of them was God saying it’s OK to eat meat.

In fact in I Timothy 4 the Bible says *in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* I Timothy 4:1-5

Reminds me of a girl I heard speak when I was in Bible college. She was on the mission field in Indonesia) and she was served a cooked rat. In fact, it still had the fur on it. And to refuse this loving gift would have been very offensive to her host. So she ate it, and as she did she kept quoting I Tim 4 over and over again. *every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

But now there is one restriction on what man is to eat and this becomes a very important concept that is developed throughout the rest of the Bible.

Verse 4

Here is the first indication in scripture of the nature of blood, and the foreshadowing of the atonement. Remember, blood was shed when Adam and Eve were given clothing of animal skins. Blood was shed when Abel offered his acceptable sacrifice.

But now God gives a revelation, *the life of the flesh is in the blood.*

The flesh was given for meat, but the life of the flesh was given for sacrifice.

Approximately 1000 years after Noah God would give His Law to the people of Israel. I want you to see what He says in that law about blood.

Turn to Leviticus 17 page 106 Read verse 11

The words “life” and “soul” are the same Hebrew word (*nephesh*) in Genesis 9:4, and Lev. 17:11.

Blood performs the function of conveying the necessary chemicals from the air and food to sustain and renew the physical, and in particular, to maintain the consciousness and the thought process of the brain. All of this complex of operations is called the “life” or the “soul”, the consciousness which distinguishes animal life from plant life.

The “life” of an animal, spilled out on a sacrificial altar, was accepted by God in substitutionary death for the life of a guilty sinner who deserved to die but who was permitted to live because of the sacrifice whose blood made an atonement, or a covering for his sins.

Now the blood of animals could only figuratively cover sins. The reality that was represented by the figure was the sacrifice of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who *now, once at the end of the ages, has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*. Hebrews 9:26

The blood of animals, which represented their life, was sacred and not to be eaten, because it was accepted in sacrifice in substitution for the life of a person.

Not only that, but God wanted us to revere the principle of life. Remember, God’s the creator of life.

There’s also a possibility that God was warning against the pagan notion that drinking the blood of your enemy, whether human or animal, would allow the characteristics of that creature to enter you.

I. God Commands Noah And His Sons To Repopulate The Earth

II. God Gives Permission To Eat Meat

III. God Prohibits The Murder Of Human Beings And Establishes Government To Punish Offenders

This is what God is really leading up to, man’s blood, representing his life was even more sacred than that of an animal.

Verse. 5

God didn’t want His permitting of people to kill animals for food to cause anyone to be indifferent to the seriousness of shedding blood.

Listen to this. Where man's blood is shed ruthlessly without authority, then God himself demands an account.

Even though animals share with us the possession of what the Bible calls a soul, or life, it was only human beings that were made in the image of God. It's only people that have a spirit.

That's why God says neither animal nor man is permitted to kill a man. If an animal, or a man ruthlessly sheds human blood, God says I require satisfaction, and that's nothing less than the blood of their own lives.

The word "require" is a judicial term here. God is appearing as a judge who punishes law breakers. If an animal kills a man, the animal must be put to death. If a man kills another man (purposely) then he must also be put to death "at the hand of every man's brother."

That phrase is the Hebrew equivalent of "from one another."

And so he explains what he means very clearly in verse 6.

Read 6

Notice something really important here. The authority to execute the judgment of God on a murder was delegated to human beings.

In essence this is a command to establish a formal system of human government to supervise society.

Before the flood, there wasn't any formal arrangement of human government outside of the authority of the father in the home. There was no organized way of punishing crime or preventing crime, even the crime of murder.

Remember, when Cain killed Abel God didn't kill Cain. He pronounced a curse on him and condemned him to be a wanderer on the earth. When Cain complained that whoever would find him would kill him, God even put a mark of protection on him.

At the end of Chapter 4, there is no suggestion that Lamech, who killed a young man, was even judged by God or ever had to defend himself before some earthly court.

Now, it all changes. God clearly introduces the death penalty and by doing that indirectly established the human governments that are to carry it out.

Clearly God's instructions aren't given to encourage vengeance. The emphasis is on justice. The problem isn't just some one wronging another person. It's a recognition that even fallen man is still made in the image of God. If you kill a human being you've destroyed God's image. You've put sinners hands on something that is a reflection of the divine.

Obviously some means of determining who is really guilty is assumed, even though there's no formal system laid out here.

That's because the particular form of human government might vary with times and places. It's the fact of human government under God's establishment that's being explained.

Henry Morris says, and I'd have to agree with him, that the authority for capital punishment implies also the authority to establish other laws. There are a lot of human activities that would lead to murder if left unchecked.

So really this simple instruction to Noah is the fundamental basis for all human, legal and governmental institutions.

Now here we are 4500 years later, living under a different dispensation. Obviously not everything in the Old Testament is *directly* applicable to us today. It's all for our example and learning but it is not all spoken directly to us.

The New Testament makes it clear that a person who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior is ultimately a citizen of heaven.

A Christian is described with words like "pilgrim" and "stranger" on this earth. They've pitched their tents here for a while but it is all temporary. They're just passing through town.

So the question is, does this command given to Noah still stand today and does it have anything to do with us?

Turn with me now to Romans 13 Page 1009 Read verses 1-8

This is a letter written to the church at Rome by an Apostle of Jesus named Paul. At the time that Paul wrote, the empire was a repressive, corrupt form of government.

But without dealing with any certain kind of government, the Bible says human governmental authority has been instituted by God to keep order in society and Christians are responsible to obey for 2 reasons.

#1 For wrath (verse 5) In other words the government has the power to punish wrong. So you better obey so you don't get punished.

#2 For conscience. The government is God's minister therefore we who are God's people are to obey the laws of our land as a matter of conscience.

What God established in Noah's day hasn't been rescinded. The established human government still bears the sword.

The Roman provincial magistrate always wore a sword at his side. That was a sign that he had the power to punish by death. And the Bible says, *he does not bear the sword in vain*. 2500 years after Genesis 9 the state still had the power of capital punishment.

It seems like we have two very wrong extremes when executions take place today in this country.

There is always two groups outside the prisons at execution times.

One holds candles and sings hymns and calls capital punishment murder and ungodly. Well, I believe the Bible's clearly showing that capital punishment isn't murder. It's carrying out the God-ordained method for dealing with someone who has willfully destroyed the image of God.

One of the reasons we have wanton murder is because we've done everything in our power to cheapen human life.

One of the arguments against capital punishment is that to take the life of a murderer just condones murder and cheapens life, but God says just the opposite is true. It holds human life in the highest value.

To not take the life of someone who has destroyed another human being is to say that the life of that human being wasn't that valuable. Kill someone and spend time in jail. That's all that life was worth.

Couple that with the evolutionary teaching that we are all just animals (and what's wrong with killing an animal if it suits your purpose), rampant pornography, which says the people are just things to be used, and legal abortion, which says that innocent human life can be taken to get us out of a difficult situation, and you end up with the mess we are in today.

We're told today that more and more laws need to be struck down because you can't legislate morality. But again that's not true.

Every law deals with morality. It's against the law for me to steal your car. That's a moral issue that is being legislated.

Before January 22, 1973 abortion was illegal in almost every state in the union. Abortions were being performed illegally, but they were limited to a few thousand a year.

Then suddenly every state law prohibiting abortion was struck down as being unconstitutional and the floodgates were opened.

Now we have over million abortions performed every year. Morality was being legislated and the people of the US lived by that rule.

The government *can* legislate morality. What it can't do is instill morality in people. Laws don't give people moral natures but law can restrain evil.

Along with the protesters at an execution there's always a second group who cheer the execution.

There's something really wrong when we celebrate anybody's death.

Along with that, if the death penalty is going to be used then the government has to be absolutely sure the person is guilty. Death penalty cases haven't always been held to the highest standards in our country. Since 1973 129 death row inmates have been exonerated through additional evidence.

Now, for a Christian we operate in a much higher plain than simply fear of punishment.

We don't just obey because of wrath but because of the conscious awareness that our government is God's instrument.

And the same is true no matter what form of government you might live under.

I personally see Communism as an unbiblical form of government. I say that because theoretically the state owns everything and the people merely share. That is a clear violation of God's divine right of private property.

But at the same time the government of Cuba or North Korea is still ordained of God. Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen king of a vile heathen nation but he was used as God's servant to punish Israel for their rejection of God.

The Assyrians, the Romans, all were heathen powers that mocked the God of Israel but all were God's instrument of government at the time.

And people living in China today are as obligated to obey and respect their government as we are. As they obey the powers that be they are obeying God.

And the only time we are called on to disobey is when the government requires us to do something that is sin, or prohibits us from doing something God has commanded us to do.

If the government of the US tried to enforce mandatory abortions as a method of family planning as is done in China then we would have to disobey.

If the government of the US made it illegal to teach religion to your children as it is in North Korea then we would have to disobey.

But in each case we would have to be prepared to pay the price.

In the 6th century BC Israel was over run by Babylon. (Today the region of Babylon is the county of Iraq.) There were three young Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who refused to bow before a golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon had set up.

They knew that God had established government. They obeyed the laws of Babylon. But then they were asked to violate God's law.

As they were threatened with being thrown in a smelting furnace they said, *O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.* Daniel 3:16-18

The life of those 3 Jews illustrates the two basic errors that people tend to make about human government.

One is a disregard for the state. It's a refusal to recognize it's authority, expressing scorn for public leaders, and flaunting valid laws. That characterizes much of the spirit of our age and was what Paul was dealing with in Romans 13.

Those three Jewish young men along with Daniel always treated the government of Babylon with the utmost respect. They didn't lead a rebellion. They were submissive to their government, up to a point. They wouldn't bow before false gods.

The other error that people, especially Christians seem to make, is regarding the state more highly than they should. God never called us to be patriotic to the state, only respectful and obedient.

The word patriotism literally means "of the father." Our patriotism belongs to God our Father. Our love and desire to propagate His kingdom is God's alone. Sometimes I get the feeling that people confuse the American way of life with the Christian way of life.

To speak out against the wrongs of our country is considered unbiblical. To protest legally against our countries policies is seen as an act of treason.

There was a fellow named Jeremiah who didn't appear very patriotic and it got him in a lot of trouble.

You see, when God was going to send Babylon to punish Israel for their disobedience to Him He first sent Jeremiah His prophet to warn the king.

And the king said we're God's people. How dare you say that pagan Babylon could be used by God. And all of the King's prophets told the king, "Fight you'll win. Israel will be victorious. God is on our side."

But Jeremiah said "Don't fight, lay down your arms and surrender." What an unpatriotic message. He said, Your country is corrupt to the core that's why this is happening.

And everyone got mad at Jeremiah and they locked him up in stocks. He kept on speaking out against Israel's sins and they threw him in a slime pit.

All the false prophets said that Israel would break the yoke of Babylon, but Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, *Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.* Jeremiah 38:17

But Zedekiah wouldn't listen. He was all caught up with what everybody would think of his leadership. And Babylon came in, sacked and burned Jerusalem and killed Zedekiah's sons before his eyes and put out his eyes so that the last thing he'd ever see was his sons being killed.

Now Jeremiah loved Israel and respected the king. But he loved God most of all. And he realized that the most important thing wasn't the nation, but it was God's name and God's honor.

Lets be careful to maintain that same balance. We're to give honor, pay our taxes, and show respect to our government. Just like Jesus did to Rome and believers are to do in North Korea and Cuba and Iran.

But let's also make sure that our place of first allegiance is to God. The very same government that Paul and Jesus respected eventually took their lives. It took their lives because they chose to render unto Caesar that which is Caesars but also chose to render unto God that which is God's.

I enjoy living in this country. I respect our government and I believe it's the greatest form of government around but I don't love my country more than God. I don't love my country right or wrong.

I pray that while we're respectful and obedient, that all of us might be burdened with the sins of our nation the way Jeremiah was. That we might weep over the calloused indifference of God's people. And that we might pray for revival before God judges us the way He did Israel.

And that none of us might think because America has been so blessed that we are invincible, but that we might realize where our true dependence and loyalty has to be in God alone.