



CHURCH VS STATE

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Big Idea: The relationship between church and state is not a problem to solve but a tension to manage.

Key Scriptures: Matthew 16:18-19; Luke 22:28-38; 1 Peter 2:9-11; Ephesians 2:19-22; Philippians 3:20; Romans 13:1-7; Hebrews 11:13-16; Matthew 10:16-20

1. One of the best ways to get real about tension is to step outside the drama and look at the situation from every angle.
 - a. How do you typically handle tension?
 - b. Think of the tension you are facing right now. What would stepping outside the drama involve for you?
2. How should our review of church history influence how we speak of the relationship between church and state today? Are things as clear-cut as people from both sides of the aisle would have us believe? What implication does this have for the organized church in this political season?
3. The tension between church and state can be generalized to missiology (the gospel and truth) and ecclesiology (church discipline and standards for leadership). A strong church has clashed with the state on essential beliefs and acceptable behavior.
 - a. Think about the clashes between 'church' and 'state' today. Do these clashes fall into these two categories?
 - b. What does your answer tell you about the relationship between God's standards and the standards of the world?
 - c. Read Romans 13:1-7. How should Paul's advice guide the way we respond to contentious issues being discussed by the state?
 - d. Read Revelation 13. When is it right for a believer to resist and revolt?
4. Paul was a Jew and a Roman (see Acts 22:22-23:11). In some stories, Paul is 'anti-Roman.' In other stories, he's 'anti-Jewish.' When we put it all together, we discover that Paul is neither against Rome nor against Israel but *for* Christ

and the Gospel. You are also a dual citizen. When the New Testament addresses your earthly status, it refers to you as an exile and a sojourner.

- a. How easy is it for you to view yourself as an ambassador of heaven, an exile, and a sojourner before your earthly citizenship?
- b. How can we be proud to be American and 'proud' to follow Christ?

5 .While Christians are not called to work for the new creation in their earthly home (because that will be ushered in when Christ returns), they are called to extend God's rule and reign in the part of the world he has called them.

Extending God's rule and reign requires you to get involved in God's work.

- a. How involved are you in extending God's rule and reign?
- b. How involved are you in ministry beyond:
 - i .Your family?
 - ii.Your church?

6. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14. What lessons can we apply from this text about the responsibilities of a Christian in America today?