

A Brief Look at the Two Kingdoms: Church and State

- I. God has established his **church**, and through the church's work he cares for our souls (Matthew 16:17-19; Hebrews 13:7,17; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:15). He brings people to faith through the Word and sacraments (Romans 1:16; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:25-27). He strengthens his church and comforts his people through the work he has given the church to do (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).
- II. God has also established **government**, and through the government's work he cares for our bodies (1 Peter 2:13,14; Romans 13:1,2). He maintains peace and order in society through laws; he protects people's physical well-being through the enforcement of laws (Romans 13:3-7).
- III. True Lutherans have historically tried to avoid using governmental force to further the cause of the gospel, while also recognizing that Christians may serve in the government and be served by the government.
- IV. True Lutherans have also attempted to avoid the confusion of the two kingdoms. The church and the government each have their own distinct mission and distinct ways to carry out that mission. As God's children, we live in both kingdoms and strive to be obedient servants in the church and to the government.

The Augsburg Confession:

Now inasmuch as the power of the church . . . bestows eternal benefits and is used and exercised only through the office of preaching, it does not interfere at all with public order and secular authority. For secular authority deals with matters altogether different from the gospel. Secular power does not protect the soul but, using the sword and physical penalties, it protects the body and goods against external violence.

That is why one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular. For spiritual power has its command to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments. . . . It should not annul or disrupt secular law and obedience to political authority. It should not make or prescribe laws for the secular power concerning secular affairs. . . . In this way our people distinguish the offices of the two authorities and powers and direct that both be honored as the highest gifts of God on earth. (XXVIII:10-13,18)

Discussion

1. Can you come up with at least five blessings we receive from God through the church's work and five blessings through the government's work.

Church:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

State:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

2. Matthew 22:15-21

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax[a] to Caesar or not?” 18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” 21 “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” 22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Herodians were men who actively supported the Roman government. So the trap is? If Jesus says “no” – don’t pay the tax, he would be accused of _____.

If Jesus says “yes,” go ahead and pay the tax he would be accused of _____.

Jesus’ answer demonstrated how Christians live in two kingdoms. Explain.

3. Read Acts 5:17-42. What circumstances demand that Christians disobey the government? What should such disobedience look like?

How do our beliefs regarding the two kingdoms affect how our congregation might want to approach things like hosting soup kitchens or doing community service?

How does the Bible’s teaching of the two kingdoms affect how we as individuals look at “political” issues like prayer in public schools or gay marriage?

- ◆ A Christian can run for office and be a politician. However, how do our beliefs regarding the two kingdoms affect how a Christian will conduct oneself as a politician? What can they do? What can they not do? What challenges will they face?
- ◆ Patrick Henry was mentioned in the sermon this weekend and praised for his desire that his family members remain in Christ. What are the pros and cons of praising the spiritual lives of our founding fathers?