

PROCLAMATION MINISTRIES

2016 PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTION: A BIBLICAL  
PERSPECTIVE

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# 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## INTRODUCTION

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We live in a day when truth and transparency have fallen by the wayside; they have been replaced by the post-modern philosophy that says, “If it works, do it.” As a result, all political and public discourses are guided by the imperative: tell people what they want to hear. Jonathan Gruber, professor of economics at MIT and chief architect of the Affordable Care Act, said, “Exploiting the stupidity of the American voter is fun and easy; kinda like squeezing a lemon.” He also infamously opined: “The typical American voter is so stupid, his dog teaches him tricks”<sup>1</sup>

The truth, however, is that most Americans are not stupid, but many lack discernment. The Bible says, “Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment” (Pr. 15:21). Malcolm Muggeridge observed: “People believe lies not because they have to, but because they want to.” Like dead fish, many Americans swim with the political stream of the day, believing a lie. Anyone who tries to go against the stream is regarded as suspect.

When lack of transparency is considered a huge political advantage, how should we as Christians separate truth from falsehood and decide for whom to vote in the upcoming presidential election? Does the Bible provide any guidelines to help us in this process? I believe it does. In this paper, I would like to address three truths relative to our course of action in the November election: our consolation, our obligation, and our direction.

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## OUR CONSOLATION

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Our greatest consolation, irrespective of any situation in life or national politics, is God alone—who He is and what He does in history. First, we are consoled by the fact that *God reigns* and is the Lord of all. The apostle Paul declared to the stoic and epicurean philosophers of Athens that God, who made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24). The psalmist exclaimed, “The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). The Bible teaches that God rules over the nations (Ps. 22:28).

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). What this means is that Jesus Christ has a claim on every human life and His Lordship extends to every aspect of our lives and society. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian, noted: “No single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘mine.’”<sup>2</sup>

Because God is ruler over all that He has created, including our political systems, we can rest assured that God is in control of our affairs and guides the movement of history toward His intended purpose. The Bible says, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. 2:20). We may not always understand what God is doing, but we can be certain that His ways and judgments are always right (Ps. 105:7; 119:75).

We can be confident that God rules over the upcoming presidential election. As responsible citizens, we must exercise our duty to vote for the candidate who best represents our values, but in the end God determines the final outcome of this election. The Bible says, “For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the judge: He puts down one and exalts another” (Ps. 75:6–7). God has decreed before the foundation of the world who will win in this election, and He uses our freedom to vote as the means to accomplish the “counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11).

Second, we are consoled by the indomitable reality that a day will come when *God replaces* the kingdoms of this world with His everlasting kingdom (Rev. 11:15). It does not matter who wins the 2016 presidential election or what the direction of the political wind might be now or in the future; we can rest easy knowing that God’s kingdom will prevail in the end. The prophet Daniel described the kingdom of God as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which breaks in pieces all the kingdoms of man and fills the whole earth. It is an everlasting kingdom that shall never be destroyed (Daniel 2:34–45). Jesus described the kingdom of God as a pine nut that a farmer plants. Though it is small, it grows into a huge pine tree so that eagles can build nests in it (Matt. 13:31–32, MSG).

We must keep in mind that though Christ has inaugurated His kingdom at His first advent, and He rules in the hearts of all who have surrendered their lives to Him, the kingdom of God is not yet fully manifested on earth. We are in what is commonly known as the “already and not yet” stage of redemption history. But the day will come when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10–11). When Christ shall put all His enemies under His feet, He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father and subject Himself to the Father that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:20–28).

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#### OUR OBLIGATION

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Though our permanent citizenship is in heaven, as Christians living in the United States, we have a twofold obligation. First, we are obligated to *supplicate* to God for those in authority. The apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1–2). We are explicitly told to pray for all who are in authority, whether or not we agree with their political views. It is a Christian obligation. We should make it a priority to pray for those in authority at the local, state, and national levels, because God desires “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). The prophet Jeremiah exhorted the exiles in Babylon to pray for the city and their captors. He said, “And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace” (Jer. 29:7).

Second, we are obligated to *submit* to those who are in authority. The apostle Peter wrote, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment

of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good” (1 Pet. 2:13–14). The apostle Paul echoed the same admonition: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Rom. 13:1). The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17).

While Christians are expected to submit to governmental authorities, they may disobey a civil government when obedience means disobedience to God’s explicit command (Ex. 1:17, 21; Matt. 2: 8, 12). When Peter and John were told by the Sanhedrin not to preach the gospel, they answered: “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard....We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:20; 5:29). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego disobeyed the command of Nebuchadnezzar when they were commanded to bow to the golden image (Dan. 3:13–27). They said, “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” (Dan. 3:18). Such disobedience should be demonstrated peacefully, without resorting to any form of violence.

A modern example of such civil disobedience is seen in the case of the Christian business Hobby Lobby. The Affordable Care Act mandates businesses, including Christian businesses that hold to the biblical view of the sanctity of life, to offer abortifacient contraceptives (contraceptives that destroy a fertilized egg) in their insurance plans of their employees. The Hobby Lobby company refused to abide by this mandate because its owners believe that it conflicts with their religious view of the sanctity of life. David and Barbara Green, founders of Hobby Lobby, refused to yield even at the risk of paying a fine of \$1.3 million per day. The case went to the Supreme Court, and in a 5-4 decision the court ruled that a closely held company can be exempt from providing contraceptive coverage under The Affordable Care Act.<sup>3</sup>

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#### OUR DIRECTION

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To be sure, voting is a personal responsibility, which should be exercised with thoughtfulness and sound judgment. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that Christians should only vote for a Christian candidate. Because God reigns and controls the affairs of humans, He can put anyone in a position of power to accomplish His purpose. God sent Joseph to Egypt and providentially led him to become the prime minister to save a people through which the Messiah would come. He caused Pharaoh, who was not a believer in Yahweh, to show favor to Joseph and elevate him to a position of power and influence. God provoked Cyrus, an unbeliever, to make a proclamation allowing the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. God called Cyrus His “shepherd” and the “anointed” one to do His good pleasure (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). The Bible teaches that God “changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings” (Dan. 2:21).

In the final analysis, the will of God will be established. But that does not mean that we should sit idly and do nothing. American theologian Jonathan Edwards maintained that God is a God of means, so He uses our decisions, choices, and feeble faculties to accomplish His will. He uses our freedom and responsibility to vote as a means to elect whom He has ordained to be the president of the United States at this point in our history.

As responsible Christian citizens, we must vote for that candidate who is most likely to uphold the values that are consistent with the teachings of the Word of God, no matter what

his or her religious beliefs or convictions may be. What biblical tests can we apply to the 2016 presidential candidates when deciding whom to vote for? I would like to suggest three critical tests for our direction.

#### **TEST OF SAFETY**

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience's sake. Rom. 13:3–5

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 1 Peter 2:13–14

These two pivotal passages inform us that the primary function of a government is to protect its citizens. The Bible teaches that those in positions of authority are appointed by God to promote the safety of the people by punishing evildoers and praising those who do good works. Whether they realize it or not, they are the “servants of God” appointed to maintain law and order. However, this does not mean that everything they do will always be right. There are many examples in the Bible that show that rulers in authority were found to do that which was evil in the sight of God (Luke 3:19; Dan. 4:27; 1 Kings 11:6).

As long as our government carries out its responsibilities in a just manner and promotes safety of the people by punishing evildoers, it is serving as the agent of divine punishment on wrongdoers. Safety of the public is compromised when punishment is not carried out swiftly. The Bible says, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). People feel safe when those vested with power to govern judge according to the law of the land with fairness and impartiality.

The test of safety requires that all presidential candidates be evaluated for their level of commitment to upholding the law and punishing wrongdoing justly. It is equally important to investigate to what extent these candidates are abiding by the law in their own personal lives and whether or not they have a record of violating the law while serving in positions of authority.

#### **TEST OF SECURITY**

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 1 Tim. 2:1–2

The apostle Paul exhorts us to pray for those who rule over us, so that they will facilitate and promote the kind of atmosphere in which we can live securely. In the ancient Greco-Roman culture, people worshipped different gods, including the emperor. Christians and Jews, on the other hand, were committed to worshipping only one true God to the exclusion of all other gods. So Paul encouraged Christians to offer prayers to God on behalf

of those in authority so that they may create an environment in which Christians could worship the one true God undisturbed in *tranquility*.

Second, our security is promoted when those who govern administer the law with *equity*. Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, prophesied concerning the wrath of God impending on Israel and the kingdom of Judah saying, “Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity” (Micah 3:9). Isaiah lamented over the sin of inequity in Judah: “Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isa. 59:14–15).

A distinctive mark of a government that looks after the well-being of its subjects is its application of the “rule of law” with equity. Winston Churchill said, “An efficient and a successful administration manifests itself equally in small as in great matters.”<sup>4</sup> God instructed new kings of Israel to write a copy of the Mosaic law and remind themselves constantly that they too are subject to the law of God just as the people they rule (Deut. 17:18–20). Theologian Wayne Grudem notes: “In actual practice, the principle of ‘rule of law’ means that no king or president or prime minister would have unchecked power. The king would not be above the law, but would be subject to the law....The principle of rule of law is violated, however, whenever any person or group in a society has unchecked power and can disobey the law without fear of punishment.”<sup>5</sup>

Recently, Navy sailor Petty Officer First Class Kristian Saucier was charged with felony for taking and keeping six photographs of his submarine’s propulsion system classified as confidential. He admitted to his felony and, as of this writing, stands to face the possibility of serving 63 to 78 months in prison. Mr. Derrick Hogan, his defense attorney, cited the case of Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of State, who kept in her personal server 110 emails in 52 email chains (according to FBI Director James Comey) deemed classified at the time as “top secret” in making a case to reduce his punishment to probation. “In our case,” wrote Hogan in a filing to the federal judge in Connecticut, “Mr. Saucier possessed six (6) photographs classified as ‘confidential/restricted,’ far less than Clinton’s 110 emails. It will be unjust and unfair for Mr. Saucier to receive any sentence other than probation for a crime those more powerful than him will likely avoid.”<sup>6</sup>

When a government fails to apply the rule of law with equity, people feel insecure and violated. To be sure, in our fallen world, rulers and those in authority may not apply the law with equity every time, but as “ministers of God” they should be committed to the principle of equity. As Christians, we must keep in mind that only Christ will rule His kingdom with justice and equity. The psalmist declares: “Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world and the peoples with equity” (Ps. 98:8–9). As it relates to the 2016 election, the question that should be asked is: which of the two candidates is more likely to apply the rule of law with equity? Equally relevant is the question: which of these two candidates has a record of escaping the rule of law by virtue of power or position? Remember, the best predictor of future performance is past performance.

Third, our sense of security is enhanced when we live under a government that guards our *liberty*. God esteems highly our freedom to choose. When He created Adam and placed him in the garden, He gave Adam the liberty to eat from every tree except one. Adam exercised his liberty and chose to eat from the forbidden tree. God said to His people

through Moses: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut. 30:19). Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28). These and many other Scripture passages affirm the fact that God holds our freedom to choose in high esteem. As God’s image bearers, we reflect to some degree His attributes of rationality and freedom of choice.

In the United States, we expect our government to protect the basic freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition the government. Under the U.S. Constitution, we should be able to participate in the public life of our nation without fear or having to compromise our strongly held biblical values. If we cannot do that with liberty, then our security is in peril. Our founding fathers strongly held that protecting these basic freedoms is one of the most important duties of the government.

In the past eight years, Christians have been increasingly marginalized and their basic freedoms attacked by our leaders. Conservative and Christian organizations were targeted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and subjected to unwarranted scrutiny and harassment. In Washington State, Muslims demanded the Kent School District to accommodate their dietary needs by removing pork from the menu. The school district gave in to satisfy the dietary restriction of Muslims. In contrast, a Christian baker in Colorado, who refused to make a cake for a gay wedding because it conflicted with his convictions, was threatened with prosecution by the District Attorney, whereby the baker could face a sentence of twelve months in jail. Two Christians were arrested for reading the Bible aloud in front of the Department of Motor Vehicles in Hemet, California. What are the chances of two Muslims getting arrested for reading their Koran in public? These are just a few examples of hostility toward Christians. David Barton has published an excellent list of anti-biblical actions taken by the present administration affecting Christians and its preferential treatment of Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

Tranquility, equity, and liberty are important attributes of a secure society. All presidential candidates should be evaluated to ascertain their likelihood of promoting these principles if elected. What is their level of commitment to safeguarding our liberties guaranteed by the Constitution? Or how likely is it that a candidate might take the nation in a direction contrary to what is envisioned by our founding fathers? These are important questions that should be asked before casting our vote.

## **TEST OF SOVEREIGNTY**

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings. Acts 17:24–26

The apostle Paul declared to the Athenian philosophers that God is the creator, sustainer, and judge of all. He is the source of life and has made all nations from one common origin or source, allotting the period when they would exist and fixing the boundaries of their habitation. The Greek word *horothesia*, which is translated as

“boundaries,” means “limiting the area to be colonized” or “setting the boundary of habitation.” Interestingly, this word appears only here in the New Testament.

At the Tower of Babel, man’s sin was defying the command of God to disperse and fill the earth. Today, our sin is trying to alter the boundaries set by God for the nations. In the name of globalization, progressive liberals want to make America borderless, without giving any consideration to the dangers it poses to our country. During the reign of Asa of Judah, he built fortified cities in Judah for protection even though the land was at rest and peace. He said to the people of Judah:

Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.  
2 Chr. 14:7

The United States is a sovereign nation with set boundaries, and it is the duty of the U.S. Government to ensure that its borders are fortified and protected. When we declared independence from the rule of Great Britain, we decided to become a self-governing and independent nation, with the right to defend ourselves from any foreign interference or threat to our sovereignty. True, we are a nation made up of immigrants, meaning we can trace our ancestry to those who came from abroad into the United States. In a technical sense, even the Native Americans are “immigrants,” for their ancestors migrated into North America from Siberia and surrounding regions 10,000–15,000 years ago during the glacial period when glaciers retreated temporarily.<sup>8</sup> But the fact that we are a nation of immigrants does not nullify our sovereignty or the right to decide whom we allow to enter our country.

The Bible teaches that in ancient Israel there were strangers (also called aliens, and sojourners) dwelling among the Israelites (Ex. 12:48). These strangers or sojourners were identified with the Hebrew word *ger*, meaning they were accepted as legal residents with certain rights. As part of their legal status, they were allowed to participate in many of the Israelite festivals and ceremonial rituals, including circumcision, and enjoy some of the privileges of the natives. God specifically instructed the Israelites not to mistreat or oppress the strangers among them (Ex. 22:21). Others who did not have these legal rights and privileges were called by different Hebrew words (*nokriy*, *nekar*, and *zar*), commonly translated “foreigners” or “unknown” persons from another country who were not considered lawful heirs. For example, when Abraham was sojourning in Hebron, he identified himself as a foreigner and visitor, recognizing that he was there at the pleasure of the sons of Heth (Gen. 23:4). In fact, nowhere in the Bible do we find any indication that Israel was required to accept foreigners or grant them any rights.<sup>9</sup> In modern terms, they would be considered illegal residents.

A responsible immigration system is vital for preserving the sovereignty of a nation. There should be a distinction between those who come into the United States as legal immigrants and those who enter illegally. Giving illegal “foreigners” the same rights and privileges as that of legal immigrants or citizens is unacceptable and unbiblical. Allowing thousands of refugees from places that are hostile to our country is dangerous to our security. Protecting the borders should be a high priority for a government that seeks to be “God’s servant for your good” (Rom. 13:4).

At the same time, our government should have a system in place to deal with illegal residents in a way that is just and fair as determined by the laws of the land. It is worth

noting that most legal immigrants who have come into the United States within the last forty years have no history of assimilating into the American culture. Instead, their loyalty seems to be primarily to their country of origin, preferring to form their own separate communities.<sup>10</sup> I've been in the United States for nearly fifty years and a citizen for thirty-five years. I never thought that I would live to see the day when radical Muslims in the United States would demand with defiance that Sharia be instituted in our country, superseding the law of our land. This is symptomatic of a civilization that is decaying from within by various destructive ideologies, until at last it becomes extinct.

As we prepare for the 2016 presidential election, it is imperative that we evaluate the candidates running for the presidency of the United States for their commitment to preserving the sovereignty of our country. Their positions on border security, taking in refugees from hostile nations without rigorous screening procedures, and enforcing immigration laws already on the books should be assessed before making a choice.

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### CONCLUSION

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Our objective in the 2016 presidential election should not be electing the “perfect” candidate. In our sin-tainted world, all have fallen short of God’s holy standard (Rom. 3:23); therefore, looking for a perfect candidate would be like “chasing after the wind.” The only perfect ruler is Jesus Christ, who will rule the world in justice and righteousness when He returns. In the meantime, let us recognize that human government is instituted by God and vote for a leader who will faithfully commit to protecting the nation and promoting its welfare (Romans 13:1–6; 1 Peter 2:14). These responsibilities of the government are also clearly stated in the opening paragraph of the U.S. Constitution:

We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.<sup>11</sup>

I maintain that the tests of safety, security, and sovereignty are first-order principles for evaluating the candidates running for the presidency of the United States. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper to address other issues such as marriage, sanctity of life, judiciary, taking care of the poor, taxes, national defense, economy, and foreign affairs from a biblical perspective. In most cases, we need to look for overarching biblical principles rather than direct passages for direction. It is, however, comforting to note that the Bible has something to say about many of these issues either directly, inferentially, or by way of general principles.<sup>12</sup> As we evaluate the 2016 presidential candidates, let us follow what the Bible says: “Test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets [leaders] have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

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