

GLEANINGS — November 1, A.D. 2015
Government

What comes to mind when you hear that word? The "beltway jungle" a.k.a. Washington D.C? The source of your angst over the taxes you pay? Your local city hall?

Starting with the premise that civil (state) authority – i.e. the magistrate, to use a good old fashioned term – is only one dimension of government, let's explore more of what government entails.

DIVINE government is the fountainhead of all government, and every realm of human government is subject and accountable to God. No rule or authority is excluded from the prophetic declaration about the coming Messiah, "the government will be upon His shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6). What government will be upon His shoulders? ALL government! That prophecy has been fulfilled. ALL power in heaven and earth already has been given to the risen, reigning Son of God (Matthew 28:18)!

When God the Arch Governor created Adam pure and upright and gave him a vocation, SELF government was established. Self-control as it relates to wicked excesses (anger, lusts, various evil desires) is only a part of self government in a sinful world. It also involves purposeful determination to find and fulfill one's role in the divine plan. Self government was designed to be perpetual, pervasive, and exercised voluntarily. People who govern themselves well are the most powerful of people (Proverbs 16:32).

When God added a wife to the first man, taken from his own body (Genesis 2:21,22), and told them to be fruitful and multiply, FAMILY government began. It is within the family led by a father and mother to whom honor is due (Fifth Commandment) that self government under God is taught, exemplified, and passed on. Self governed children outgrow the need for parental government, and in most cases become the next generation of parental government over new families.

CHURCH government, equally established by God, is that which pertains to the extended family whose members are the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Professing Christians who deny the legitimacy of church government or despise its authority rob themselves. Those outside of the church and not united to Christ are in rebellion against God to begin with, so it should not surprise us when we see little success in self or family government among them.

STATE or civil government was also established by God for this fallen world. When citizens of a state are primarily self governed members of well governed families and churches, this fourth realm of government can also perform better in its limited role. To the degree that self, family, and church government are dysfunctional in a society, the magistrate tends to take over their roles, and proves itself unable to fill them without clumsy waste that grows into oppression, and from there into forceful and even violent coercion. Sorry, philosopher G.W.F. Hegel: the state is NOT "god walking on earth!"

Imagine government as a pyramid. Christ the sure foundation, Christ the only foundation, Christ the cornerstone is that pyramid's foundation. Self-governed people who are members of solid families and churches are the middle tiers of the pyramid. State government is the topmost and smallest part. A people with that kind of government structure will endure. A people who turn the pyramid upside down (making the civil magistrate the foundation of, or even the only kind of government) tumbles into chaos.

Perhaps in that figurative scenario we see the words of Jesus the Cornerstone fulfilled: "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:44, Luke 20:18)