



## The Truth Project Study Aid Harbor of Grace Church Winter 2021

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### **Week Ten (Lesson 9) Study Aid – State: Whose Law?**

When we take a look at the social sphere of the state, we must ask ourselves what it is that we believe about the role of government. For some, government is a bad word and something to be completely rejected. For others, government is a true source of hope. Since the government has tremendous power, it is no wonder that it has always been a central battle ground of ideas and power. As we saw in this lesson, without God, truth, or any higher moral standard, people are increasingly looking to the state as savior and the supplier of every human need. In the face of this trend, Bible-believing Christians must have the courage to resist what Dr. Tackett calls “the rise of the state”—to stand firm, draw a line in the sand, and say, “This far and no more.”

With these ideas in mind, we must remember that original sin, and the state of man as a fallen creature, is most informative in the discussion of civil government from a Christian perspective. The idea that man is not inherently good is offensive to many liberal thinkers, Christian and secular alike. Original sin is an important place to ground discussions of civil government. When we start with this truth that all men are sinful, we know that there will never be a perfect society established by man nor will there ever be a perfect civil government. This reminder is relevant for today because there has been an increasing pressure for the American government to provide a certain utopia. Some believe that what has kept us from realizing this utopia as a society is a lack of education, and distribution of wealth, as if education and resources are the cure for the sinfulness of man. However, as Robert Culver notes in his helpful book on the topic, “The perfection of society cannot be either promised or attained, and is not the purpose of civil government to do so.”<sup>1</sup> No earthly government led by sinful man can produce a perfect utopia-like society.

While there is a limit to what civil governments can provide and produce, in part because they will always be led by sinful people, civil government is God’s idea. Culver states, “Fifth, governments are required by God to not only rule justly, but also to ensure justice in the relationship between individual and citizens... what the United States Constitution calls ‘the general welfare’ of nations was in the original mandate (Gen. 9:1-7) for rule of man by man.”<sup>2</sup> The point is that civil government is not simply a man-made system, but a system that has as its foundation a theological mandate. How we treat one another, administer justice, defend the weak, and prevent oppression is largely outlined by our civil government, but there is still a rule above our government to which we are subject, and to which our government is disobedient when it fails to act justly in these areas. I believe that we are to place our ultimate hope in God alone, yet while we live on this earth we ought to work to establish civil governments in accordance with God’s Word, for they are an extension of God’s sovereign and providential rule.

Consider the following questions:

1. How might a civil government be disobedient to God? How would you know?
2. As a citizen, do you see your involvement in government as an act of obedience to God?
3. Why should or shouldn’t Christians be involved in government directly (as mayors, congressmen/women, judges, etc.)?
4. In what ways might our government or nation become an idol?

I pray that this study has been helpful and that God allows you to use these truths to share your faith this week. We are in a battle of worldviews, and what we believe matters. What we believe as a nation directly shapes our society and civil government.

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<sup>1</sup> Culver, Robert D. *Civil Government: A Biblical View*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Culver. 97.