

Making Noah Work

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Thesis: The Covenant of Noah establishes fundamental requirements for human government in fallen world. The covenant assumes nothing of the spiritual condition of the people involved, but lays out a requirement for earthly conduct for an earthly blessing. The Covenant of Moses builds on this by modeling a specific example of what Noah looks like. Further, it amplifies the underlying requirements of Noah in ways applicable even today, if we but chose to discern what elements in Moses are universal, and which are unique to Israel.

Introduction

It's not as if there is no biblical model of human government. Saying we who teach faith should avoid partisan discussions serves merely to highlight we have a culture so fundamentally wrong there's no point in pursuing it. Not only is the system broken, but we lack the most basic mental equipment for making sense of what God said about government. I won't pretend to set things right; what follows is a distillation of teaching by far better minds. It should be manifestly obvious Scripture is behind all of it.

The standard assumptions apply here: The Bible is the authoritative record of God's revelation. The root nature of that revelation assumes an ancient Hebraic philosophical outlook. Modern Western scholars generally class that as Ancient Near Eastern (ANE), a branch of the Mystical Eastern outlook, emphasizing a pattern of logic which is symbolic, deductive, focused on personal commitments, and produces a society which is tribal in structure and covenantal in government. If you approach the Bible from a Western rational analytical outlook, you will not understand it very well.

All Creation is Fallen. The Covenant of Noah assumes a fallen human outlook, in that it predicts sinners will be ruling sinners. If sinners could at least understand the nature of things, and order their lives in their own best interests, they will have fulfilled the Covenant of Noah. That's because fallen humans stand in dire need of civilization. That fancy word "civilization" is typically defined as a pattern of behavior which permits fallen humans to live in close proximity (i.e., in cities) without killing each other. That is hardly an absolute; rather it describes the nature of the thing.

Should we remove the Fall from the equation, ideal human existence is pastoral, thinly scattered, semi-nomadic, and the extended family is the whole of human organization. There would be no need for defense and accumulation of property. Inherent in the Fall is not simply a spiritually darkened human mind, but an inability to seek God, nor any concern for His Laws. Grace and redemption brings us back to a consciousness of what should be, a commitment to Noah, though at best a broken ability to fulfill it.

That recovery of spiritual awareness brings an immense sensitivity to suffering, as if the suffering of others is our own. That's how God looks at things, and so should we. The fundamental economy of God's Kingdom is sacrifice. This accords with the nature of Creation, where the supply of needs is sufficient and abundant, but only if we stand in Covenant obedience – we sacrifice the ingenuity of fulfilling our desires in favor of God's provision for our needs. The essence of human government in a fallen world does its best to fulfill human need by creating optimal conditions for meeting human needs. Not ideal; that's out of the equation because of the Fall. Rather, civilization of some sort is the best we can hope for after the Fall. One need not be spiritually aware, but being civilized mimics the effect somewhat, sufficient to ensure human survival and a measure of safety and prosperity.

The Covenant of Noah mandates humans try to make this happen. God's promise is nature will remain predictable as long as humans restrain themselves to a predictable pattern of life. This is the fundamental biblical meaning of "orderly life" – in a general sense, people know what to expect from you, and can make reasonable allowances to live in peace with you. Primarily, your neighbors should feel comfortable you won't prey on them. Obviously, walking in Christ fulfills that. That's what

Romans 13 is all about. To make of that some requirement to obsequiously obey the State is heresy, since the State in no wise meets the tests of civilization required under Noah. The Covenant requires living communally in the extended family or tribal social structure. No other structure can fulfill the obligations, so the secular state fails from the start. The Covenant of Noah preserves civilization as the appropriate background against which redemption plays out.

Paul also made it clear the Covenant of Moses was never about saving your soul. Obviously, it saved something else: A nation which was to preserve the cultural foundation for revelation, and to provide the background necessary to make a Messiah meaningful. We know from the record Israel was quick to depart from that Hebraic mystical outlook, trying to substitute any number of things in its place. The final disaster was adopting the Hellenist philosophical frame of reference. Just about every argument Jesus had with the Jewish leaders points back to this grave error. The leadership of His day were so hopelessly corrupted by Western rational assumptions they could not begin to understand what Moses had written, and this led to perverting the Law, twisting it beyond recognition, and elevating human reason above the revelation of God.

Roll back that horror, and we see clearly the Law of Moses, among other things, offered a model of fulfilling Noah. That is, it points to a concrete example of what Noah intended in a specific context. For this particular nation, in a given point in human history, in that specific land, Moses fulfills Noah perfectly. The cultural essence of Hebrew life, the philosophical background of Scripture, requires we understand that demonstration organically, not abstractly as required by Western culture. We have to absorb the whole, feel it's vital essence, before we can pretend to know how it might look in another setting. You can't pull out a list of features and memorize a formal matrix. The biblical approach to understanding itself is to commit yourself to what's required before you attempt to understand it.

What follows are my own thoughts on the matter. If what I propose is truth, the Holy Spirit will bring you to adopt it. If not, then I am just another fool making noise and entertaining myself.

Economics

I've always enjoyed teaching economics, and was one of the few Social Studies teachers in Oklahoma certified for that subject. One of the first things I want to know about a particular country in any part of history is what were the economics. Fundamental to the Social Sciences is the use of broad generalizations to account for aggregate human behavior. For example, if you don't understand the economic philosophy called "mercantilism," you cannot understand what drove European colonization of America by Europe. It's hardly the whole story, but it clarifies the picture.

While those who know economics might associate the biblical viewpoint with backsliding from our advanced understanding of economic principles, the first thing we have to make absolutely clear is: **A higher standard of living is not necessarily a blessing.** A great many economic choices are made for non-economic reasons, and in the Word of God, justly so. If all you want from a study of economics is how do we get more stuff, what works mechanically to that end, then you have no reason to expect you'll understand the Bible. As we read through the Pentateuch, it's more than just capturing the bare principles of Law regarding economic activity. We have to reach below the surface and realize economic behavior is just a tool for the purpose of revelation. All things serve that end, or they are sin by definition.

In Scripture, we note God requires utter dependency on Him. Not in the sense we have no clue how economics work, but in the sense we know He is not bound by it. If He desires us to have abundance of material goods, it will not matter what mechanism He chooses, it will happen. Further, He has promised those who obey His Laws (Noah as exemplified in Moses), whether they actively love Him or not, He will provide. Again, what He provides will be, by definition, what we really need as determined by His eternal purpose. Starvation is a possibility for any population, if that serves His purpose, but is unlikely. We do know in general He provides abundantly for human need and comfort on the basis of good moral choices. It's only when we let our moral character slide should we expect the discipline of God to appear, among other places, in our economics.

By the same token, no matter what you do right mechanically, God guarantees you will suffer privation if your nation turns away from His Law. You can't ignore Him by carefully following all the prescriptions of economic "science" and expect Him to bless it. Leaving Him out of the formula guarantees poverty in the long run. All Creation reacts on the basis of moral principles, and you cannot science your way out of it.

Thus, doing the right thing economically means we avoid a credit-based economy. Talk all day and show a jillion charts and calculations, but God does not favor the immorality which must inevitably flow from a credit-based economy. You cannot make it nice; it is brutal and makes God angry. Whatever you hope to gain from it is lost eventually by the sin you must commit in order to use credit as the basis of your currency and economic activity. While it won't be as fast, you can certainly have economic growth without credit. The fundamental value of all things must be rooted in the possession and use of land. Land is the primary store of value, the root of all human productivity. No land, no food. No food, no life. This is God's way.

Further, we must avoid the unusual accumulations of wealth in few hands. Surely you've read in Scripture about the Sabbatical Years and Jubilee? Those two items have a distinct economic effect, and for a good reason. There is from God's point of view such a thing as an obscene level of wealth. Greed is a sin, remember? Those two observances – Sabbatical and Jubilees – have multiple effects, but the obvious ones are people get out of debt bondage and land returns to a tribal community, so that permanent alienation is not possible.

Yes, there are times when someone's choices and misfortunes will leave them a little short. Scripture places human life above profit. If you are in a position to make a subsistence loan, you must do so without charging interest. Further, all loans must be personal. There is no room for impersonal loans by company policy, no stockholders who aren't working hands-on, etc. All things are personal. You borrow only from those who know you well. Those who make loans know before it starts they may take a loss, but must see in the life of their neighbor a value in itself. They prepare to forgive loans. Absorbing a loss is the nature of God Himself; do it for His reasons and you will never lose in the long run.

You may well engage in production and services which find a willing market. You are not permitted to remove yourself from liability in any way. However, tort complaints are highly discouraged, leaving the onus of responsibility on the user. The bulk of activity is always focused on feeding people. There is an eye to employment, in that becoming too efficient for your own profit and exempting yourself from hiring the usual number of poor working peasants is not necessarily an advancement. This is hardly communism, because no one is going to direct you to avoid efficiency, but you are compelled by God to consider it. If you have lots of money, and your neighbors are broke, you need to find a way to help them, and work is the best way. Nor are you permitted to export for a better price if your neighbor can't afford to match the price and starves. In other words, every step of the way, you are morally obliged to consider the impact on your community. Don't love the money; love your neighbor. The sneering comments about efficiency and "prosperity causes all boats to rise" from economists is a lie of Satan. Introduce changes slowly, giving the market time to adjust. God is watching.

As Christians, we add one more factor: We willingly embrace loss to our own harm. We do not actively seek to lose without a direct command from God. Nor do we expect it is ever possible to relieve poverty once for all. Instead, we realize the Lord can require us to act in such a way the result is we go broke. We can't ask those not under a higher covenant of faith in Christ to take that route, but we utterly disregard for ourselves the financial results of obeying the Holy Spirit.

Society

Hopefully the previous section was shocking enough to demonstrate a critical principle: **Satan has done a marvelous job of deceiving us on every level of our thinking. Everything in our world which passes for wisdom militates against, not just the biblical vision for human existence, but the very ability to receive and grasp the truth.** We have been crippled by the pervasive deception.

So what would a scriptural society look like, ala Noah/Moses? Again, we do not adhere to Moses

directly, because we are not Israel living in Canaan 3000+ years ago. We are not under Law, but under grace. What we see is the Law was included in Scripture because it shows us an example of grace at work in the fallen world, providing a specific model of life by which we activate the power of God to preserve Life. When we believers lay hold of what God built into His Creation, what remains after the Fall, and live according to the organic design of things, we can expect life will be the best it can be. It will seldom live up to expectations many have, but the provisions of God include a better understanding of what that “best possible existence” is from His viewpoint.

In adopting the fundamental Hebraic mystical-spiritual, other-worldly outlook, we are compelled to reach for a radically different lifestyle. The essential element is community. More than just the nuclear family, it is the extended family and close community which functions as family. The Hebrew concept of “neighbor” pulls in a powerful element of brotherhood. While you would naturally give preference to your blood kin, anyone not sharing your DNA who lives next to you day after day is only incrementally less deserving of your love. Privacy as we consider it in these modern times goes way too far. If your neighbor doesn’t know your basic habits down to the level of what you have for breakfast, they cannot help you much when emergencies arise. They won’t know you well enough to offer more than a bare humanity. God did not plan human life that way.

Conflict and sorrow requires negotiation, because no one person’s needs relegates their neighbors to abject slavery. If your stereo plays too loud, it should be a simple matter of letting you know, and you’ll turn it down. Not because they’ll call the cops to issue a citation, but because you internally believe it’s not right to force your neighbor to enjoy your particular tastes. You don’t somehow cling to the principle you can’t enjoy it if the volume doesn’t shake the foundations for a half-mile around you. You’ll accept the inconvenience of hearing their normal-volumed music just a little bit through a common wall, and contemplate better acoustics. In other words, taking the shortest path to your own personal preference is not a virtue. You won’t demand they pickle themselves in your sorrows over your son’s tragic death under the wheels of a passing truck, and you won’t demand the closure of the street to build a grand memorial to him. However, you would be rightly hurt if they ignored his death and didn’t make some effort to express a shared sorrow, because in a sense it was their son, too.

Sounds like ordinary civility, no? Except the flavor and elements of that civility should be negotiated over time, and remain stable across generations, not at all subject to the whims of creative fashion. Yet creativity there must be, or life is gone. The balance point is not something anyone can mandate from a keyboard like mine. Rather, the principle is both subtle and obvious when you read between the lines of Scripture: **To the degree possible, we let everyone do what they please, when they please.** That principle must be observed within the limits of keeping the community stable and safe. It’s easy to take pot-shots at obvious failures from the past. For example, the modern Western middle-class culture is horrendous – materialist, prissy and pretentious, demanding far too much conformity with unreasonable and fake standards. By the same token, the communal hippie lifestyle was disgracefully libertine. Yet both are symptoms of the same disorder. Both ignore the utter necessity of peaceful coexistence with people who possess a different vision of happiness, and both reach for happiness of the flesh. Both devalue people by rejecting biblical principles, and that’s the primary sin of all failed cultures.

The fundamental expectation of the biblical model is a tribal existence. Every human, however limited, crippled and contrary, is an asset to future enjoyment of life. Only when someone in the community truly threatens survival and civility should measures be taken to force compliance. At some point, it becomes obvious action must be taken. It can come in a flash when you have to kill a rapist in the act, or over time when you decide sorrowfully to eject someone who just won’t learn. It won’t take much to realize we in Western society have the wrong break-points on just about everything. The mere presence of regular police forces shows we have no clue. That the police forces are so very insular from the folks they police shows the system can’t be reformed and fixed. What we have now in America must be scrapped totally, because even though the tribal instinct resurfaces continually, we reject it and substitute something false.

For the souls reborn in Christ, we go just a bit further. The congregation of common worship is the tribe. We have come so very far from the biblical model, it’s hard to know where to start. Typically we find a separate building, to which we all must drive some distance, wherein we organize and operate

by precise rules and expectations, both written and unwritten, and hardly know anyone there well enough to be more than mere acquaintances. We share almost nothing outside the building, in part because we bring into that organization a commitment of only a few spare hours of a life devoted to keeping up a senseless chase for material goods. Here's how crazy it is: The Bible assumes no such thing as clocks. The Bible assumes human attention span, even in children, could be easily be longer than an hour. The Bible assumes you'll change your job if it demands too much of your church fellowship time. It's not as if God had to state these things clearly, because you can't do what Scripture demands without embracing these things.

- You can't obey God if you don't withdraw from the rat race.
- You can't obey God if you don't adopt a communal fellowship lifestyle.
- You can't obey God if you don't take off that watch once in a while.
- You can't obey God if you don't give Him time – however much it takes – to change your heart.

If you have to schedule God into your life, your life is wrong. My heart breaks when I hear wise church organization gurus discuss how many hours per week the average church member household will allow the church activities to take. Sure, "ya gotta make a livin'." But when that sort of phrase excuses a failure of fellowship, it's because the church refuses to organize properly, since it buys into the dominant cultural expectations of a very evil society. How come joining the congregation doesn't offer an opportunity to make a living some other way, sooner or later? How come it's not a part of the congregational dream to become a community of its own, more self-contained and self-sufficient, living by biblical standards of prosperity? It's because we never make plans for the congregation to become a spiritual tribe, and that is falling short of God's grace.

We have a very long, long way to go.

Justice

Nothing about implementing the Covenants of Noah/Moses will bring about a Utopia. From the biblical perspective, nobody even wants one, because the concept would be ridiculed from the start. We are reaching for two things here.

1. An understanding of the requirements laid down by God for people and nations without reference to whether they know His Son. By no means can nations be "Christian" – that term only applies to individuals. Rather, nations can be godly when they seek to apply the implications of the Covenant of Noah. We use Moses as a specific application of that. This is what God requires of mankind whether they know Him or not.
2. A uniquely Christian understanding of what the Bible requires of them by laying out the proper view of humanity and the world. By grasping the image of what God requires via Noah/Moses, we gain a sense of man's nature, of Creation's design, and God's own viewpoint. This is how we were designed to work. Promoting any course of action which does not find support in Noah/Moses violates the teachings of Christ, because – in His own words – those things point back to Him.

We cannot reconstruct ancient Israel, nor should we desire it. We should understand what it teaches us of the way things ought to be. You note this study does not go into much detail. It's more about asking questions, so that people of the Spirit will seek Him for an answer they can use. My answers may not work for you, and any answers I suggest won't even work for me in every situation. The point is to draw your attention to Him so you'll ask, and ask intelligently and meaningfully.

That it cannot create a Utopia means we have to assume bad things will happen, and we have to know how to deal with them. Conflict is now, after the Fall, a permanent feature of human nature. The biblical concept of justice is how we reduce the tension to a tolerable level. It assumes you will tolerate the results, or move yourself out of the community. It also assumes if you truly know the community is wrong on something, God will empower you to say it in such a way the community will listen. It assumes from the start God is deeply and intimately involved in the details, and will support His own principles even where few know Him.

Jesus implied in the Parable of the Broad and Narrow Ways the majority at any given time will not know Him. Any plan of justice assumes sinners are the majority. Not horrendous nasty people, just not in love with Jesus. The system must address their inherent weakness, their lack of a spiritual Guide working in them. He works outside them, but still works on them. And never forget: They belong here, too, until He comes to Judge all things. We might be completely surprised at some of the people He includes and excludes from Heaven. He is the Judge, not you and I. In actual practice, any discussion of whether this or that person is “born-again” serves little purpose. Since we cannot read the Lamb’s Book of Life, we must accept provisionally anyone’s declaration they have repented. In a broad general sense, the only thing we can differentiate upon is the fruit of penitence. If a someone is exceptionally well-behaved and kindly disposed to others, it’s pretty hard to justify keeping them at arm’s length just because they don’t speak in terms of your theology.

The foundation of justice in the Bible is human conduct. Not in the cold logical sense of military order, but in the broad sense of overall effect. Sure, specific acts can be prohibited as wrong under just about every context. The Scripture places a high emphasis on results, though. If no harm is done, no crime was committed. There is little concern for procedural errors. Yet, even here we can have harm which is measured in other ways. In ancient Israel, private idol worship was still harmful, even if no one found out. When they finally did find out, action was taken as if harm had been done. See how fuzzy it is? That is how it works in God’s world. There is no single principle for justice, but to note the health of the community as God sees it. That means we have to have someone in charge who tends to see things from God’s perspective.

Yes, that means we should expect tests of office. Yes, they will be religious in nature. This all assumes everyone knows we all have one nation under Jehovah, God of the Bible. No, we cannot make room for other religious beliefs. The community is formed on God, and if you join the community, you must declare an allegiance to that God. Otherwise, you can visit and be a non-citizen and keep your other religion *very* private. The concept of “diversity” as currently promoted is evil. There is no compromise; that’s *God’s* way. Get used to it.

This is not to promote the heresy of Theonomy, but to recognize some elements of it are correct. We have no mandate to take over any existing government nor build a spiritual Kingdom of God on earth. Instead, we work toward the goal of ensuring we put ourselves under a covenant community even while suffering under a fallen government. All our aims are to build up a vibrant community health, and justice as we view it aims to identify obeying God’s ways as “health.” Enforcement is chiefly by nosy neighbors. That’s God’s way. Not a Spartan regimentation, but a wise heart keeping an eye on the real health of the community, allowing maximum individual discretion within that. We choose wise leaders to function as judges over things which have no obvious solution. There is no need for a police force, but a deep and direct involvement of everyone in everyone else’s business. That’s the way of Christ, and it’s called “fellowship.” We extend the fellowship as far outward into the pagan world as God allows. We assume He will promote it in His own way, His own time, according to His own plans. We focus on being faithful, not running for public office or whatever it takes to seize control of the government outside our community of faith.

In all of this, we remain utterly dependent on God. We do not fulfill His promises – He does. The action of faith is to empower us to assume what is often contrary to what our senses and estimation tell us. We want to have peace, prosperity, freedom from threats, and these things are available without Christ in an earthly form. Yet it’s all too obvious those things only symbolize externally what we seek spiritually. As Christians, we withdraw a great way from secular politics, because that was originally designed for sinners governing other sinners. Instead, we build inward a community of faith and love, with all the human foibles of those who struggle daily to keep Adam nailed to the Cross. While there are a multitude of pragmatic concerns with justice within the Body, and without, we cannot begin to address them until we have that strong community. Once we have that powerful center of gravity pulling us together in Him, we will find the world outside drawn by the same power.

If you somehow feel prayer for the peace and justice in your community is just something we have to do, and can’t quite grasp how God will most certainly answer, your faith is broken. But when your congregation of faith prays for crime in your area to decrease, it will – it must, because God promised it. Our calculations in implementing Noah/Moses must include this as the starting point.

Injustice

Justice is working to create an atmosphere which discourages unnecessary harm to people. Injustice is a condition where people are harmed for no good reason. God has made it abundantly clear what He considers good reasons for human suffering. A critical element in this is knowing we are not Him.

A fundamental expectation of Noah is people will be left in peace. To the degree possible, humans ought to be free to pursue their own best interests. The onus of proof lies with those who seek to interfere. Some things are obvious: taking other people's stuff, destroying and killing what isn't yours, playing head games and manipulating people into behavior which causes them harm (lying), and generally failing to treat your neighbor as your family.

These days we call a lot of things "rights" contrary to God's design. For example, having someone smack you upside the head is not necessarily a crime. It really depends on why he did it. I can easily admit I've done things in the past that would justify a whack or two. Accidents are very well covered in Moses, as is various forms of tort liability. You'll notice there is a great deal of attention paid to roles. Naturally, this leads to a difference in status. Sorry to shock you, but God has designed us to be inherently unequal in many ways. The obvious one is talents and abilities. The role you play in society will affect what you can and cannot do justly, and the same action by one is just and by another unjust.

The Bible grants a huge discretion to parents in dealing with children. Aside from a community concern you don't raise hellions, your children are your business until they reach at least nine or ten years of age. Somewhere along those years, children gain an awareness of self which manifests in several different ways. They have absorbed basic linguistic skills, are capable of formal logic and accurate estimation of cause and effect, and ready to begin modeling themselves after a larger selection of adults outside the home. It may be a tragedy that your actions bring death to your children, but until that age, the Bible makes no room for anyone outside the family getting involved. However, it is assumed the extended family will be involved. There is absolutely no allowance for any authority outside blood kin until that child is around that age point.

Education, marriage, and a host of household issues are completely under the extended family or local community. You notice most everything in life which matters becomes a matter of your community. We find a break point at ten households, and again at fifty. There should be judges at those levels, and virtually nothing rises above them. The focus of addressing trouble is mostly about roles, results, and long term health of the community. The people who correct you are the people who know you best. Western culture does this utterly wrong. On the one hand, we tend to let status become absolute within a very few generations, so we demand there be none, pretending it's possible. To remove the personal element from restoring justice is to destroy justice. By its very nature justice is personal, a move to restore fellowship first, and property is strictly a secondary matter.

There is no allowance at all for a standing armed service, except as a role taken by privilege. That is, if you can't afford the leisure to train and equip yourself, you can't afford to play soldier. There's no such thing as policemen. When something internal just cannot be handled by the community leaders, the local soldier can deputize a force size necessary for the task. Those he deputizes are the same people who would be conscripted for defensive war. Every able-bodied man should be expected to defend his community, and weapons should be available, as well as seasonal training. Professional soldiers are primarily combat commanders of conscripts. Because wars are only defensive, the individual takes responsibility for feeding and clothing, for getting their training, but not necessarily for arming themselves (it depends on economics).

There is no allowance at all for projecting military power outside the borders, except in extraordinary circumstances when external actors refuse to mind the borders, or exhibit other intractable threats. The whole point is to keep what's yours and leave others alone with what's theirs. Always negotiate when possible. Make alliances with anyone who will, but always place tight *personal* conditions on those agreements.

God promised long ago any nation could expect from Him generous support and protection simply for observing this matter of addressing injustice. It's not a matter of "fairness and equality" but staying

out of people's business and giving them discretion consistent with their roles. By honoring justice, we can claim God's help in providing all the natural resources we need to live and be comfortable, all the protection we need to remain safe, and a general expectation of health and resistance to plagues and natural disasters. *This promise has not failed throughout human history for any nation.* It has been the nations which have failed.

We as followers of Christ see in this promise a symbol of higher things. We willingly absorb more injustice than the we would expect of the rest of society. We choose to forgive for ourselves and seek justice for others. While we might be willing to help defend the people from attack, we are so focused on the business of building the Kingdom of the Spirit, we would tend to be rather poor at martial arts. Not a lack of skill and ability, but we have a strong reluctance to use them.

As a final note here, please understand there is a powerful distinction between social issues and defense issues. Social welfare is a community concern, and all of it must be handled within the community by community leaders. They *are* the government for such things. Only defense, internal and external, is handled by the sword. There remains a clear break between the two, and your community leadership had better be able to win support enough to need no armed enforcers. Not only is the modern state anathema in Noah/Moses, but Israel was never supposed to have a king, either. The clan-tribe-nation breakdown of government is the whole thing, and local community is the primary level of government anyone ever sees. It is utterly incomprehensible how a national government can set policy which will work across the whole nation. **A strong central government is a sin.**

Politics

You might call the relationship between two people any number of things, but the moment you introduce a third person, it always involves politics. Politics is the art of persuading third parties to support something, typically against some second party. The academic study of Political Science is mostly about theory and practices as observed from a broad array of historical sources. A similar field is Government, which overlaps a great deal, but tends to deal with a specific government and the policy process.

In Scripture, the image for any good leader is that of shepherd. It does confer a separate status on the leader. The assumption is this status is earned by working his way up through the various roles serving other leaders. Only in Western society would this be equivalent to a warlord. In typical ANE outlook, warlord is a separate role entirely from community leader. The community leader is seldom the oldest, but the most effective. Obviously, it requires winning hearts and minds, because it is a covenantal leadership, not a vested status from somewhere above. He's the father figure, the chief, the trusted head of community-as-household.

Women do not lead men, but most certainly do exercise a tremendous influence. In Hebrew society, they formed a parallel system, which operated as only women can. Areas of influence were distinctly gender role associated. It's hard to imagine a better way to run things. Ignoring female input is utterly foolish, just as foolish as letting them actually lead. Even Paul nails this down as essential for understanding.

You should get the feeling very few things were ever presented for a vote. Most decisions were by consensus through trusted advisers. It would sound like the "good old boy network" but we must keep in mind the Lord says this is how it should work. There are ways of dealing with evil, but simply disagreeing does not justify causing trouble for leaders. If your community leader won't at least reason with your strongly held ideas, he has released you to move to another community. This is his loss, because every responsible male is an asset.

The whole purpose of community remains claiming the promises of Noah. People together in community can get a lot more done with the same resources compared to a disassociated bunch. Specialization of skills leads to efficiency in production of the basic necessities of life. Obviously, a group united can more easily defend their combined resources than all of them could alone. The art of civility is measuring the degree of distance we keep between ourselves and our neighbors to

maximize the harmony of the community. The art of politics is providing the sense of unity and vision of how best to keep everyone healthy, happy, and sane to maximize the benefits of cooperation. The Bible assumes there are certain options eliminated because those methods are sinful, and cannot work.

Some of those sins are more obvious than others. A list would include, but not be limited to:

- **Deceiving the people.** Nothing can be gained by keeping things from them. It's all about informed consent. If you have to lie or keep secrets, you have lost God's support.
- **Violating the sanctity of the household.** It may just tear your heart out to watch how your neighbor raises his kids, but those children were placed in that home by God. Using the standard pressures of a tribal community, you can have a powerful influence, but you are utterly forbidden from taking unilateral action. The same can be said of other domestic relations. It's not a question of the rights of people under a man's authority as head of household, but your complete lack of authority from God to interfere forcefully.
- **Confiscating property.** Only after a strong judicial sentence can life, liberty or property be threatened. Nothing the community needs, or seems to need, can justify confiscation of private property. If it is not willingly surrendered, you have not made your case. If someone is stupid and truculent, you should have already figured that out, and not provoked needless conflict. Ancient leaders typically funded many things from their own personal means; it was the purpose for letting them get wealthy.
- **Intrusive regulation.** It takes a special arrogance to believe people need to be told what to do and how. Prevent people from harming others, not themselves. Everyone has a fundamental right to be stupid when they harm no one else. God forbid anyone should ever consider regulating one person to profit another.

There is no allowance in Scripture for any person or group to limit their liability by forming a non-person entity to stand before the judge as "a person." In the Bible, everything is personal, and there are no contracts. All agreements are covenants; they are commitments of individuals, not resources or some other abstract concept. The same holds for government – every action taken in any role is personal, and liability is personal. So is forgiveness for mistakes.

This is perhaps the only setting where Christians can engage the political process, to include taking leadership roles. People who desire to rule are morally unfit because of that desire. People willing to lead when it becomes necessary are ideal. They do so knowing they carry a heavy load of personal liability. We do that with the added confidence of Christ working in us. We will be the first to step down when it becomes apparent we are no longer suited for the role. As people of God who love others sacrificially, we are made morally fit to lead best of all, because we can let it go if the needs of others call for it.

The greatest evil on this planet in terms of politics is the modern secular state. Human wisdom came to the secular state because it builds on fallen understanding and rejection of revelation. That no nation, including ancient Israel, could keep things working for long is proof of what fails. The world has yet to see a modern nation cling to the principles of the Word long enough to show what works, to reveal the design of Creation.

Science and Knowledge

The fallen mind is still capable of amazing discoveries. We make a grave error when we ask, "Can we?" and forget to ask, "Should we?" The rhetorical device of asking, "Why not?" rejects already God's answer.

All human need can be answered righteously. The trinity of temptation¹ draws us to seek every other way but God's. We have no trouble understanding how Lust of the Flesh gets us in trouble, and have done a fair job of opposing sins connected to that. We know sex outside the marriage covenant of

1 See "The Nature of Sin and Temptation," <http://soulkiln.org/bible/trisintempt.html>

man and wife is wrong, we rightly call abortion “murder,” and even seem to understand bad eating habits are pretty rough on the Temple of the Spirit. The previous section on politics goes a long way toward addressing the Boastful Pride of Life. However, we seem to have a huge problem with Lust of the Eyes.

This is not merely a puritanical call for making nudity and bikinis illegal, though it includes that. People of the Spirit cannot deny an excessive show of flesh comes only from an immoral desire. It’s an obvious call to the Lust of the Flesh via the eyes. Once having seen disgusting porn, we know it is really difficult to forget it. The same can go for witnessing a horrific injury. Something about that experience just shocks the system. Expose the eyes too frequently to such things, and an appetite grows to see more and more. It becomes an idol. Some knowledge is damaging.

Modern Western society acts as if innocence is a disability. Why would we think someone who lacks psychological scars is somehow less fit to take their place in this world? Having experienced some of these things, I can’t imagine lacking a desire to keep others from them. Knowledge is not neutral. There are some things we aren’t designed to handle, and those who insist on thrusting them upon the awareness of the world cannot claim innocent motives. Should it not serve as a sort of hint the people who make the most alarming movies are some of the most immoral wretches on the planet?

This is all of a piece, a single whole. Yes, investigating all possibilities can bring about some wonderful improvements in human life. Medicine is an obvious example. Some technology advances serve as wonderful tools in the Kingdom of Heaven, but most good things come with a down side. The very nature of the Internet brings together Christians for fellowship and teaching which otherwise would cost immense sums. The nature of the Net also makes passing revolting images of sexual abuse of minors easy. Making something illegal simply because it could be, or is, used for evil would mean removing all tools and binding all human hands and feet. Somewhere you have to make room for evil or you can’t have any goodness. That we seldom bother to ask if there is a point of diminishing return is a mark of having lost our way.

The Bible doesn’t address technology directly because it was written before there was much technology. God’s command to Moses Israel should outlaw the use of horses in battle was about chariots, actually. Riding horseback was exceedingly rare until much later. While we know the issue is partly a matter of avoiding the strong association of chariots and horses with pagan religion, it was also a matter of trusting God to do things His way. Israel on foot did easily overcome massive numbers of charioteers in several battles, even when outnumbered, provided they had chosen to trust God. In a certain sense, it was not necessary to engage in an arms race. Early on, Israel with bronze weapons defeated bigger armies with iron weapons. The winning factor was always a trust in God. Specifically, they took care of a very human problem using God’s provision. Switching to chariots and iron weapons at that point would have been a serious drain on resources, and that was not God’s way. Ask our heavily armed and armored troops in Iraq today if a hundred-year-old bolt-action rifle is still a threat to them.

The question to ask, then, is whether this or that advance is okay with God. Progress is not always progress, but has become the idol of modern man. At the same time, the typical church answer is too often a reflexive “NO!” There are surely some things I would undo if I could: TV is clearly established as a hypnotic device, causing the average brain to suspend discernment. In its current use, it serves to destroy or weaken the faith of many, by implanting unconsidered assumptions of what is good and bad deep in the mind. Not a single major TV network offers anything which blesses; at best, there are a tiny handful of things which appear harmless. However, the problem is the thing itself – it neutralizes the spiritual defenses. Further, I would not complain in the least if there were no images or media files of any kind passed on the Internet. All text and only text would be fine with me. Your mileage may vary, but I came to my conclusions after a great deal of prayer and consideration. Failure to pray and consider is a sin, itself.

For Christians the fundamental question is: *What do I really need to serve God?* It matters not at all how much better this thing works, or how much more interesting it is, and whether it drives the human mind to soaring heights. Those things are not the ultimate value in the Kingdom. Most of what we have today is completely unnecessary. Using something more primitive will hardly challenge

God to find a way to bless it. Let His Spirit guide.

Conclusion

The Word of God presents a fairly clear image of what is required of human governments under the Covenant of Noah, by examining the Covenant of Moses as a particular model. There is plenty which does not apply to us today in a far away land. A prominent example is much of Kosher Law, and the requirement for a Temple. The procedures of worship and ritual purity died on the Cross with Christ. There is plenty left to work with in the Law of Moses to help us understand what it means to say a government has sinned.

Is it possible for a human government to adhere to Noah? Obviously, yes – it is well within reach. Is it likely? No. As a consequence, every government will eventually fail, and nations will rise and fall with increasing frequency. For Christians, we have here a clear standard by which to judge them. Not in the sense of justifying an effort to overthrow such governments, but we have the basis for prophetically pointing out how they sin. On those rare occasions when we are in the driver's seat at any level of human government, we have a clear road map for making it right.

In particular, this is a call for Christians to consider pulling back as far as the situation allows, to create a climate as much as possible conducive to holiness. It should be plain the closer you stand to the model, the better you can expect God's temporal promises to come into play. At the same time, we dare not lose our other-worldly outlook, which recognizes in the long run, nothing in this world matters. It's merely the issue of revealing God by our manner of governing, by the things we demand, to enable a consistently spiritual behavior. As much as God permits, build a righteous human community as a lighthouse to the fallen world.