
GOD SPEAKS ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ISSUES

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By Jim
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We've heard from everyone else on some pressing campaign issues, so perhaps we can take a little time to look at a few things God says. God concerns himself with human systems of governance only to the extent they reflect his awesome creative power and overriding concern for the welfare of his earth and its creatures. When human systems fail to perform their divinely-ordained functions they fall under his approbation and sometimes-violent correction. That's what seems to be happening now.

One particularly relevant Bible passage on the powers, duties, and responsibilities of political leaders is Deut. 17:15-20, which places certain beneficial duties upon the king and sets limits upon his power and greed. Among other things it establishes the still-in-effect principle that top leaders should be native-born citizens. Especially pertinent for today is the commandment that the ruler shall not "cause the people to return to Egypt."

The 400-year captivity in Egypt was intended to direct national thinking for generations to come. The exploitation and suffering endured by the slaves formed the ethical basis for future leaders to rule so that such a disaster could never happen again. That such disaster has repeatedly occurred is only a commentary upon the ravages of economic and political sin as they continually pull down God's people into servitude, all done with the connivance of corrupt and malleable leaders paying no attention to what God says.

As you thoughtfully (and I hope prayerfully) consider how to vote next week, ask yourself what would be the effects upon the public of economic, social, and political policies supported by the parties and candidates. What would be the effect upon retired persons should Social Security be either privatized or severely limited to save money? What is the effect of a military establishment already costing more than the next eight or ten nations put together? Will it enhance our lifestyle, or will it embroil us in misguided foreign intrigues generations into the future? And ask yourself if suggested economic policies will help remove us from the grasp of greedy corporations, or will bring us

closer to a return to the conditions existing in Egypt centuries ago?

Another much-needed duty of the king was to pursue lifelong learning of the moral and ethical ways of God. Moses put it this way: "when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he not turn aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel."

I think what you'll find is that most political candidates today consider what God says about political and economic justice to be irrelevant to the modern world and its complex problems, and far beyond the range of Divine instruction. So we use the Bible as a source of quaint sayings and general "good" behavior; but not as a source of moral guidance on virtually every issue now facing the shaking and staggering world.

It is the task of religion to point out God's way to national freedom and individual choice. Religion is uniquely situated as an ethical source to do exactly that through its ability---although not adequately used---to "speak truth to power" as God now demands. Things will change once we get the meaning of our destiny under the guidance of God, and begin to act upon it.

So as you prepare to vote, investigate the religious convictions of your choice, and whether or not they have any effect upon what the candidate says. To what extent does your choice fulfill the requirements for statesmanship pointed out by Rufus Fears (whom we've quoted before): Does the candidate exhibit rock-solid principles, a moral compass, a vision, and the ability to create a consensus around the vision? These are the differences between politicians and statesmen, or stateswomen.