

The Authority/Subject Relationship

I. GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED IN THE BEGINNING

A. The original intention of governmental structures: Authority and Government are God's idea.

²⁶And God said, "Let us make humankind in **our image** and according to our likeness, and **let them rule**... ²⁷So God created humankind in **his image**, in the likeness of God he created him, male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and **fill the earth and subdue it**... (LEBGenesis 1:26–28)

¹⁵May you be blessed by Yahweh, who made heaven and earth. ¹⁶The heavens are Yahweh's heavens, but **the earth he has given to the children of humankind**. (LEBPsalm 115:15, 16)

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶**You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet**... (ESVPsalm 8:3–6)

B. The distortion of the image and the corruption of government.

But **like Adam, they transgressed the covenant**; there they dealt faithlessly with me (see Gen. 3). (LEBHosea 6:7)

⁵And Yahweh saw that **the evil of humankind was great upon the earth**, and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was always only evil. ⁶And Yahweh regretted that he had made humankind on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. ⁷And Yahweh said, "I will destroy humankind whom I created from upon the face of the earth, from humankind, to animals, to creeping things, and to the birds of heaven, for I regret that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh. (LEBGenesis 6:5–8)

⁴And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top reaches to the heavens. **And let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth**."

⁵Then Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that humankind was building. ⁶And Yahweh said, "Behold, they are one people with one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. So now nothing that they intend to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand each other's language." ⁸So Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city.

(LEBGenesis 11:4–8)

C. Discipline and testing for the sons of man ever since: A curse and death as ultimate limitation.

Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous— **you who test the minds and hearts**, O righteous God! (^{ESV}Psalms 7:9)

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; **his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man**. (^{ESV}Psalms 11:4)

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and **the LORD tests hearts**. (^{ESV}Proverbs 17:3)

You return man to the dust, saying, "Return, O sons of man." (^{LEB}Psalms 90:3)

D. Promise and Hope for restoration of righteous government upon the earth.

⁴"As for me, behold, my covenant shall be with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵Your name shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶And I will make you exceedingly fruitful. **I will make you a nation, and kings shall go out from you**. (^{LEB}Genesis 17:4–6)

II. A FRAMEWORK FOR THE HISTORICAL SITUATION: KEY PASSAGES RELATED TO GOD'S OVERSIGHT OVER THE KINGS OF THE EARTH

³**And God came to Abimelech in a dream at night**. And he said to him, "Look, you are a dead man on account of the woman you have taken. For she is a married woman." ⁴Now Abimelech had not approached her, so he said, "my Lord, will you even kill a righteous people?" ⁵Did not he himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' With integrity of my heart and with cleanness of my hands I did this." ⁶Then God said to him in the dream, "**Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you did this, and I also kept you from sinning against me**. Therefore, I did not allow you to touch her. ⁷So now, return the wife of the man, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you and you will live. And if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, and all that are yours." (^{LEB}Genesis 20:3–7)

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; **God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do**. (^{ESV}Genesis 41:25)

²⁰Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹He changes times and seasons; **he removes kings and sets up kings**; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding..."(^{ESV}Daniel 2:20, 21)

¹King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ²It has seemed good to me to show **the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.** [...] ²⁸All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³²and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, **until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.**" (ESV Daniel 4:1–2, 28–32)

²²Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, **the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia**, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²³"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, **'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem,** which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.' (ESV 2 Chron. 36:22, 23)

III. THE TESTING OF MESSIAH UNDER AUTHORITIES AND HIS EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY AND MERCY

³You have tried my heart; you have examined me by night; **you have tested me**; you found nothing. I have decided that my mouth will not transgress. ⁴As for the works of humankind, by the word of your lips, I have kept from the ways of the violent. ⁵I have held my steps in your path My feet will not slip. (LEBPsalms 17:3–5)

- A. As a member of the Jewish nation which was then subjected by God to the authority of Rome, He found himself in the crucible of a divinely preordained plan that required His ultimate trust upon the Father and the giving over of His life at the hands of wicked rulers and governors.
- B. He stood His ground to overcome the temptation of resistance by restraining privilege and force on the basis of the Scriptures' witness.

²¹From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that **he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes**, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, God forbid, Lord! This will never happen to you!" ²³But he turned around and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a cause for stumbling to me, **because you are not intent on the things of God, but the things of people!**" ²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (LEBMatthew 16:21–24)

⁵¹And behold, one of those with Jesus extended his hand and drew his sword, and striking the slave of the high priest, cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place! For all who take up the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³**Or do you think that I cannot call upon my Father, and he would put at my disposal at once more than twelve legions of angels?** ⁵⁴**How then would the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen in this way?"** (LEBMatthew 26:51–54)

C. Let's keep in mind that crucifixion was the exclusive punishment of insurrectionists!

D. He set his eyes on a Kingdom beyond this age and on the reality of ultimate authority.

Jesus replied, "**My kingdom is not of this world.** If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here." (LEBJohn 18:36)

¹⁰So Pilate said to him, "Will you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus replied to him, "**You would not have any authority over me unless it was given to you from above.** For this reason the one who handed me over to you has greater sin." (LEBJohn 19:10, 11)

E. He forgave and prayed for His victimizers.

But Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**" And they cast lots to divide his clothes. (LEBLuke 23:34)

F. In this way, the only wise God who rules above all brought forth the unimaginable wisdom of a *crucified King* (pardoning the oxymoron!), through whom He would show the world, and the powers that be, the only legitimate way in which authority and subjection are to be implemented in His sight.

IV. THE APOSTOLIC ADMONITION AND EXHORTATION:

A. In the waiting for the arrival of God's Kingdom disciples of Jesus are called to conform to a standard of life characterized by patient endurance and a very unique and set apart way of relating to others. We are not to function like everybody else but embody a life ethic that resembles the cross of Messiah and the certain hope of resurrection and eternal life. We are called to "*present our bodies as a living sacrifice.*"

¹Therefore I exhort you, brothers, through the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And **do not be conformed to this age**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may approve what is the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God. (LEBRomans 12:1, 2)

B. As Paul continues his exhortation, he elaborates on by mentioning several significant things that apart from the chapter division are directly interrelated:

¹⁴**Bless those who persecute, bless and do not curse them. [...]** ¹⁷**Pay back no one evil for evil.** Take thought for what is good in the sight of all people. ¹⁸If it is possible on your part, be at peace with all people. ¹⁹Do not take revenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰But "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this, you will heap up coals of fire upon his head." ²¹**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** (LEB Romans 12:14–21)

¹**Let every person be subject to the governing authorities,** for there is no authority except by God, and those that exist are put in place by God. ²So then, the one who resists authority resists the ordinance which is from God, and those who resist will receive condemnation on themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of terror for a good deed, but for bad conduct. So do you want not to be afraid of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from it, ⁴for it is God's servant to you for what is good. But if you do what is bad, be afraid, because it does not bear the sword to no purpose. **For it is God's servant,** the one who avenges for punishment on the one who does what is bad. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, **for the authorities are servants of God,** busily engaged in this very thing. ⁷Pay to everyone what is owed: pay taxes to whom taxes are due; pay customs duties to whom customs duties are due; pay respect to whom respect is due; pay honor to whom honor is due. (LEB Romans 13:1–7)

"What Paul teaches in this passage has to be understood against the background of the OT itself, in which Israel was instructed, especially in the time of the exile, to respect governing authorities, even to pray for them: Jer. 29:7 ("Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord on behalf of it, for in its welfare will be your welfare")."¹

C. This accords with Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:

¹First of all, then, **I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,** ²**for kings and all who are in high positions,** that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴**who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [...]** ⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; (ESV 1 Timothy 2:1–8)

D. In context to severe persecution the apostle Peter also urged disciples as follows:

¹ Fitzmyer, J. A., S. J. (2008). [*Romans: a new translation with introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 33, p. 665). New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ¹³**Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (ESV 1 Peter 2:11–17)**

E. Tell the story of meeting the former mayor of my city at the barber shop.

V. MERCY, A WITNESS-WARNING AND MARTYRDOM

- A. Despite God's desire for righteous governance and for every person, including those in authority, to come to the knowledge of the truth, wickedness and corruption continue reaching unsurmountable heights that will undoubtedly come to a final crescendo in the last days. Nothing less than a merciful faithful witness that includes martyrdom will be required from the church.

¹²Indeed, **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted**, ¹³**while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived. (ESV2 Tim. 3:12–13)

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of **those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne**. ¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, **how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**" ¹¹Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (ESV Revelation 6:9–11)

- B. Encouragement for moms: A provoking witness from the Jewish martyrological tradition that calls us to steadfast allegiance to God, His ways and His Messiah, even unto death.

²⁰**The mother was the most amazing one of them all, and she deserves a special place in our memory.** Although she saw her seven sons die in a single day, she endured it with great courage because she trusted in the Lord. ²¹She combined womanly emotion with manly courage and spoke words of encouragement to each of her sons in their native language.

²²I do not know how your life began in my womb, she would say, I was not the one who gave you life and breath and put together each part of your body. ²³It was God who did it, God who created the universe, the human race, and all that exists. He is merciful and he will give you back life and breath again, because you love his laws more than you love yourself.

²⁴Antiochus was sure that the mother was making fun of him, so he did his best to convince her youngest son to abandon the traditions of his ancestors. He promised not only to make the boy rich and famous, but to place him in a position of authority and to give him the title Friend of the King. ²⁵But the boy paid no attention to him, so Antiochus tried to persuade the boy's mother to talk him into saving his life, ²⁶and after much persuasion she agreed to do so.

²⁷Leaning over her son, she fooled the cruel tyrant by saying in her native language, My son, have pity on me. Remember that I carried you in my womb for nine months and nursed you for three years. I have taken care of you and looked after all your needs up to the present day. ²⁸So I urge you, my child, to look at the sky and the earth. Consider everything you see there, and realize that God made it all from nothing, just as he made the human race. ²⁹Don't be afraid of this butcher. Give up your life willingly and prove yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may receive you back with them at the resurrection. (GNT2 Maccabees 7:20-29)