

Kingdom **POLITICS**

GOVERNMENT *from*
GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

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About the Author

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, founder and president of The Urban Alternative, former chaplain of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, and author of over one hundred books, booklets, and Bible studies. The first African American to earn a doctorate of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, he has been named one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world by Baylor University. Dr. Evans holds the honor of writing and publishing the first full-Bible commentary and study Bible by an African American.

His radio broadcast, *The Alternative* with Dr. Tony Evans, can be heard on more than 1,400 US outlets daily and in more than 130 countries.

Dr. Evans launched the Tony Evans Training Center in 2017, an online learning platform providing quality seminary-style courses for a fraction of the cost to any person in any place. The goal is to increase Bible literacy not only in lay people but also in those Christian leaders who cannot afford or find the time for formal ongoing education.

Dr. Tony Evans was married to his late wife, Lois, for nearly fifty years. They are the proud parents of four, grandparents of thirteen, and great-grandparents of three.

For more information, visit TonyEvans.org.

How to Get the Most from This Study

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

Group Sessions

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Dr. Evans.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. This page includes key points from Dr. Evans's teaching, along with blanks for taking notes as participants watch the video.

DISCUSS. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Dr. Evans's video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

Personal Study

Each week provides three days of personal study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions: "Hit the Streets" and two Bible studies.

HIT THE STREETS. This section highlights practical steps for taking the week's teaching and putting it into practice.

BIBLE STUDIES. These personal studies revisit stories, Scriptures, and themes introduced in the videos to help participants understand and apply them on a personal level.

Tips for Leading a Small Group

Follow these guidelines to prepare for each group session.

Prayerfully Prepare

REVIEW. Review the weekly material and group questions ahead of time.

PRAY. Be intentional about praying for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

Minimize Distractions

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by considering these details:

Seating

Temperature

Lighting

Food & Drink

Surrounding Noise

General Cleanliness

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

Include Others

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include any people who visit the group and to invite new people to join your group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite people to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible-study book.

Encourage Discussion

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

Keep Connecting

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week.

Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through these communication channels:

Emails

Texts

Social Media

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities like these:

Meals

Fun Activities

Projects around Your Home, Church, or Community



Week 1
**RULER OF
THE NATIONS**

Start

Welcome to group session 1.

What sources have most shaped and informed your political views?

How helpful would it be to read a manual on assembling a dresser for baking a cake? Or consider how useful an owner's manual for a Honda might be for a Tesla. Manuals and instruction guides are good and helpful, but they are only good and helpful when used with the item they describe.

Many people look to the Bible as a kind of life manual when it comes to how to navigate family relationships, spiritual growth, or their relationship with God. We consult the Bible on church dynamics, personal choices, wisdom, and the spiritual life. Yet when it comes to politics, many people pick up Satan's manual, the world's manual, or even their favorite news channel's manual. None of these will prove to be as helpful as God's Word.

Why is it important to view the subject of politics from a biblical perspective?

What are some dangers in ignoring biblical principles related to politics and leaning on the world's political ideologies instead?

You simply cannot read the Bible and ignore the fact that God involves Himself with political affairs. As we read God's Word, we witness Him establishing nations, creating constitutions, dismantling nations or leadership. He makes laws and ordinances and dispenses wisdom to and through kings.

Unfortunately in our day, God and politics are disconnected from each other far too often. The failure to properly connect God's relationship to politics based on His Word has left individuals, leaders, and nations without of the knowledge needed to govern society as the Creator intended. As we start our study we'll learn how politics, governments, and our relationship to them is to run smoothly both for the benefit of the people and the glory of God.

Invite someone to pray, then watch the video teaching.

Watch

Use this page to take notes as you watch video session 1.

Discuss

Use the following questions to discuss the video teaching.

*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written:
“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

REVELATION 19:16

This verse is the greatest political statement in all of Scripture. When Jesus returns to rule, He will be the visible ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). There will be no exit polls, no news cycles, no political posts, and certainly no election. He will establish His rule instantly.

In the meantime, Jesus rules from His heavenly position, where He remains sovereign over the kingdoms of this world (Colossians 1:16-17). Serving under His authority, kingdom-minded churches develop kingdom disciples who promote and advance God’s kingdom agenda in the political realm. When this happens, we partner with Christ by manifesting His heavenly rule and authority in the world.

What are some practical ways kingdom disciples can help manifest Christ’s authoritative rule on earth?

What are some ways believers in the past have mishandled their responsibility of stewarding politics leading to division rather than order?

The glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom is the central theme of Scripture. God governs His world through the principles rooted in His kingdom agenda, which is defined as *the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life*.

In the Bible, God’s rule shows up through the establishment of four basic realms: the individual, the family, the church, and the society. These can also be defined as four forms of government functioning within God’s kingdom agenda: self-government, family government, church government, and civil government. Each of these governments is defined biblically as a sphere of delegated authority.

Ruler of the Nations

Take a moment to talk through the four spheres of delegated authority and share how each passage relates to the specific category.

Self-Government: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Family Government: “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” (Genesis 18:19)

Church Government: In the same way He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (1 Corinthians 11:25)

Civil Government: Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. (Romans 13:1; also see Romans 13:2-7)

God rules over all. While an institutional separation exists between church and state, neither the sacred and the secular nor God and politics should be separated. Our view of God will always be reflected in our politics, whether we want it to or not.

Describe why an understanding of God’s rule over all informs God’s rule over governing authorities. How does this show up in our engagement with political processes and ideals?

Let’s kick-off our Bible study on Kingdom Politics in prayer.

Prayer

Lord, open our eyes and our hearts as we study this delicate yet all-important subject. Help us to learn to shape our views by Your Word to apply Your wisdom in every area of life, including our politics.

Hit the Streets

DESERT ISLAND GOVERNMENT

Imagine one day you find yourself fleeing from a shipwreck and being washed up on a solitary island in the vast ocean. The local people welcome you and appoint you their leader. Since you have no hope of rescue (and you are hungry and need a job), you decide to accept this assignment. Now you are faced with the question of how you should organize your newly formed government.

You skip the option of anarchy (the absence of government), after all you would be out of a job. You then consider other options such as: oligarchy (the rule by an elite few); monarchy (the rule by one supreme authority, perhaps a king or queen); ecclesiocracy (the rule by an institutional or state church); democracy (the rule of the citizenry); or perhaps, being originally from the United States, you might choose a constitutional republic (rule by the people through their chosen representatives who function under constitutional law).

Of course you would want to choose to govern according to the principles you knew from God's Word. As you consider your options, let these additional questions guide you to your decision.

Of the systems of government you know, what are the benefits and drawbacks of each?

Ruler of the Nations

In what ways do those governments align or conflict with godly principles?

Which most closely aligns with how you believe governments should function?

If you do ever find yourself on a solitary island, it is helpful to know God operates through decentralized, plural institutions, under His centralized leadership in order to produce self-government under Him. In other words, God has given men the ability and the authority to govern under His supreme authority.

It is crucial for us to understand that when each of the spheres of authority (individual, family, church, and civil government) operates as God designed them, they will flourish. This principle follows the command Moses told Israel to “keep the words of this covenant and do them, in order that you may be successful in everything that you do” (Deuteronomy 29:9). When people, families, churches, or a society operate with God as the ultimate source of authority, they put themselves in a position to be used by Him and experience His blessing.

Bible Study 1

WHEN JENGA GETS JUMBLED

Read Genesis 11:1-9 before completing the following study.

In Genesis 11:1-9, we read about a time in history when humanity first concocted a plan for world domination. They wanted to build a global society that would erase the Creator-creature distinction and dependence on God. They tried to centralize their power to “make a name” for themselves (Genesis 11:4).

In Scripture, a “name” symbolizes a definition of what something is. To name something was like establishing governance over it. When God told Adam to name all of the animals, God was setting Adam in a position of governance and responsibility over the animals he had named. That’s one reason God changed people’s names after they changed their relationship to Him in Scripture. The name change signified a new identity and allegiance.

The people who gathered together to “make a name” for themselves thought a one-world global community and government could eradicate the need for God because of their consolidated power. Yet, this was in direct disobedience to God’s command in Genesis 9:1 to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” (See also Genesis 1:28.)

Why would God want to direct humanity to multiply and fill the earth instead of telling them to remain localized?

Name some purposes and strategies political leaders use today to “make a name” for themselves.

What are the dangers of making a name for ourselves as a societal goal?

What does Genesis 11:6 give as the reason for God's destruction of the tower and scattering of the people?

The people Babel marveled at their own creation as their tower became taller each day, and Scripture offers us an ironic comment in verse 5. Despite their craftsmanship, they weren't so crafty that they achieved their goal of reaching the apex of heaven. God still had to come "down to see the city and the tower which the men had built" (Genesis 11:5).

It did not matter how proficient the people had become at building the tower or how much their technical expertise had developed. The people gathered together to define themselves and worship their own cleverness, and despite their best efforts, God still had to "come down" to see it. Men will never equal God.

What was the result of mankind's attempt at ultimate control?

What does this teach us about human limitations in ruling?

Read Isaiah 46:1-10. What does this passage teach about humanity's attempt to create "gods" or "power structures" on earth?

God is the sole power in the universe, and He does not allow any other claimants to the throne. God designed the governments of mankind to be decentralized (underneath His sole authority) and to operate through multiple human authorities that function with checks and balances.

What are some examples of decentralized governing authorities that operate with checks and balances?

Kingdom Politics

The problem for power-hungry humans is that regardless of what we think, say, or try to create, we still depend on a Creator. Everything and everyone ultimately depends on God. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. As the builders in Babel discovered, the most people can do apart from God is rearrange what He has already made.

God operates as the sole Sovereign over His kingdom. All other authority is delegated and dispersed across multiple spheres of responsibility. Romans 13:1 supports this principle by encouraging believers to “subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” Notice that *authorities* in this verse is plural. All “authorities” are established by God and are ultimately responsible to Him. These “pluralized” governments align with the four realms of self-government—family, church, and civil governments.

Why is shared and plural authority actually good for human flourishing?

The civil government is delegated the authority to promote and maintain justice, protect freedom, and defend its citizens. Because it functions under God as one of three institutions (alongside the family and the church), its role is designed to be limited. So, it functions best when the family and the church are taking up their own roles to equip individuals for better self-government.

What are some results that you have observed of the civil government stepping outside of its God-ordained role and taking up some of the responsibilities of the family and the church?

Note that the imperial power of Rome was the context of the civil government for many of the biblical references given about civil government (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-15). In fact, the emperor was likely Nero who was remembered as one of the most oppressive rulers in history and was vilified for his persecution of the early Christians in Rome.

Paul and Peter still respected oppressive governments.

What does this teach us about our relationship to civil government?

Ruler of the Nations

What are some ways they resisted that government to follow Jesus?

How does trusting God as the Ruler of the nations and Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords shape your interactions with lesser authorities?

Closing

As we come to a close on today's personal reflection, take a moment to pray. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to align your heart and spirit with Him so that you can fully grasp His perspective on politics, civil government, and your relationship to it. You might also want to pray for your eyes of your heart to be opened to identify any spiritual warfare that takes place in today's political landscape. Ask God for discernment to recognize truth from falsehood. In doing so, you set yourself up to be a kingdom representative of His values relating to society.

Bible Study 2

AUTHORITY UNDER THE RULER OF NATIONS

We'll discuss the role of civil government more fully in the next session, but from God's perspective all government is rooted in levels of responsibility. All of His spheres of government—individual, family, church, and civil—rest on this reality. When functioning properly, each individual area of government produces accountability, responsibility, and productivity, starting in the individual sphere and working its way to the civil

For example, an individual who takes responsibility for self-government will strengthen the family government. A strong family government will contribute to healthy church governance. A healthy church impacts the wider realm of civil society.

Working backward, the civil government should promote justice so that the church, family, and individual can have the freedom to properly exercise their respective jurisdictions under God's authority.

How can a healthy family government impact the wider spheres of the church and civil government?

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:13-16

How can the church take up this responsibility to influence the wider sphere of civil society as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”?

How has the church inadvertently caused harm in the wider civil society by failing to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”?

The issues we face should lead us to the conclusion that we can't fix our problems alone. We can make all the mandates, take all the precautions, pass all the economic stimulus packages, and host international summits that we want, but if a spiritual root is erupting in rotten fruit, only God can solve the issues at hand. God will not allow any nation to solve its problems through political alliances alone. We desperately need to bring our faith into the civil and political arenas where God has placed us.

We have a decision to make: We can continue rebelling against God's rule, or we can challenge ourselves and our political leaders to return to God willingly and bring healing to our land. God's ultimate goal is for an international theocracy under the lordship of Jesus Christ (Psalm 2:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25). But until that day, God will still accomplish His goal for His creation on earth—whether we return to Him willingly or whether, like Babel, God has to come down and intervene for us to get right with Him.

What are some helpful and practical ways Christians can challenge political leaders to return to godly principles?

Name one thing you will commit to do to help the process of returning politics to its rightful place under God's rules.

Returning to God is the only way for us to experience redemption as a country and peace in our land. He is not far each of us, but we must recognize His sovereign rule (Acts 17:27). God wants the politics of our land, and how we discuss them, to reflect kingdom virtues—the set of values described in His Word. This happens when His followers prioritize pursuing a relationship with Him, which includes submitting to His ultimate rule. God has been and always will be the Ruler of the nations, and He wants all nations, languages, and people groups to praise Him (Psalm 2:10-12).

Read Revelation 7:9:

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all the tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.”

REVELATION 7:9

What does this passage reveal about where the whole world is headed?

How should this reality influence our present day relationship to civil politics and governance?

Scripture is clear that God is the sovereign ruler over His creation (Psalm 96:10). Sovereignty is the theological word that describes God’s absolute right to govern the world He created according to His good pleasure. God’s sovereignty is a crucial doctrine to grab hold of as we go through this study on kingdom politics because it describes what it means for God to be the ruler of the nations. It is to be kept in the forefront of our thoughts because it is the basis for God’s authority. This doctrine makes it clear that God both rules and overrules.

Read the following passages on God’s sovereignty and His rule over nations. Reflect on them by rephrasing them or responding to them in your own words:

*“I know that You can do all things,
And that no plan is impossible for You.”*

JOB 42:2

*Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and on
earth, in the seas and in all the ocean depths.*

PSALM 135:6

Ruler of the Nations

It is He who changes the times and the periods; He removes kings and appoints kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to people of understanding.

DANIEL 2:21

Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set.

PROVERBS 22:28

“Even from eternity I am He, and there is no one who can rescue from My hand; I act, and who can reverse it?”

ISAIAH 43:13

What do these verses teach us about God’s rule over the nations? Why is this important for us to keep God’s sovereignty over the nations in mind throughout this study?

Acknowledging God’s sovereignty allows us to see lesser authorities from the proper perspective. Because God is the ruler of the nations, nations function best when they align themselves under His rule. When people and nations return to God relationally under His kingdom rule, He can bring order and peace to a chaotic environment (2 Chronicles 15:4,15).

Closing

Pray right now and ask God to guide us as a body of believers to rally around His kingdom purposes for our nation. May He deliver healing in our land, and may He use us to help bring this about. Praise God for the times He has worked in history and how we expect Him to work for His glory in our nation.