

A Word About Political Elections

by Frank Viola

In every presidential election, those who cheer for a particular candidate feel like it's closed curtains for the free world when their candidate loses. Those on the winning side feel the opposite.

Laying that aside, in virtually every election, countless Christians engage in the same level of anger, vitriolic rhetoric, and political smackdowns in which the unbelieving world engages. There is little difference except for the words "Jesus" or "God" peppered in.

To both mourning Christians and celebrating Christians, I wish to remind you that no president or prime minister ever brought in the kingdom. And no president ever will.

Reality check: If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are part of an embassy of a radically different empire with a radically different kind of politics.¹

You belong to a kingdom that's not from this planet, yet one which demands your full allegiance, total passion, and very life—something that many people (even many Christians) have given to a political party or candidate.

As ambassadors of God's kingdom, we can rest assured that God has everything under control. Whether you are in abject fear or delightful relief with your newly elected president or prime minister, the Lord calls us all to touch the throne on that person's behalf:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1–4 NKJV)

Notice the prayer here. It's not that the political rulers of the world will transform the culture to make it obey God. The prayer is simply that the political authorities will allow us as Christians to live "quietly and peaceably" for our Lord.

As we have already seen, the ekklesia is not a secluded, isolated enclave. It stands in the world and for the world as a witness and a testimony. The claim that "Jesus is Lord" is a political statement that refuses to claim Caesar—or any other entity—as Lord.

So wherever you stand after a political election, don't let your heart be troubled on the one hand, nor place your full hope in *any* fallen human on the other.

¹ I've written more about the relationship between the kingdom of God, the ekklesia, and politics in chapter 7 of Sweet and Viola, *Jesus Manifesto*, "A Collision of Two Empires."

To do so is to forget that you are part of an eternal kingdom that is part of the heavenlies.

We don't pledge our allegiance to any flag other than that of the kingdom of God. When we lose sight of this, we begin to engage with our political opponents like the world does, criticizing and even demonizing them. Demonization should only be relegated to non-human entities. Too many Christians are willing to say that those who disagree with them politically are evil.

The outcomes of this world's political elections neither mean the salvation nor the demise of the world. They are but specks on the grand radar of time. Put things in perspective, please. Our spiritual forefathers lived under rulers who fed them to lions, lit them on fire as human torches, and persecuted them with other barbaric forms of oppression and slaughter.

Don't yield to the temptation to become engrossed in partisan politics, forgetting who you are and to whom you belong.

We are part of a kingdom that will outlast, and eventually overcome, all others.

Jesus is the Lord of that kingdom. He is also the Lord of this world, no matter who is in power presently or in the future.

Seek first His kingdom, which includes showing this world what the kingdom of God looks like, acts like, and feels like—especially during heated political seasons.

All presidents, prime ministers, and kings will be but a footnote in the pages of history. But the kingdom of Jesus Christ shall have no end.

This understanding removes fear and panic when it comes to our governmental officials.

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