

Politics - Under the Sun

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[0:00] Thank you very much, I thought that's a bit of a challenge. Well, the first question, I suppose, is what is politics anyway?

! Laws are given into history, they take a place in history, and laws also can affect, of course, the progress of history.

And if politics has any purpose at all, it's presumably to guide the process of history in that sense, of nations and internationally.

And, of course, we all search for justice and good laws, don't we? I mean, nobody deliberately sets out a bad law, though there are a lot of bad laws around, but nobody deliberately sets out to produce bad law.

But that actually just raises more questions. What exactly is justice? There's a great deal of confusion about that nowadays, I'll come back to that a little bit later.

[1:24] How do you decide what good law is? There's actually a great deal of confusion over these issues, certainly in the world today.

You've only got to listen to what the politicians say to see that. But also, perhaps unfortunately, among Christians as well. I doubt they're going to be able to clear up all the confusion this evening, but at least we can try and generate some light rather than heat.

So, first of all, let's take a step back and consider the first issue. What is history? Well, I mean, you know the standard evangelical answer to that.

History is his story. Yeah, well, that's certainly true, but again, as we were thinking with Ray's testimony, the detail kind of matters.

The process of history is what we're really asking about. What is the process of history? And does it matter anyway?

[2:35] Or is it relevant to Christians, really? A couple of weeks ago, Phil reminded us of the human project, that God created man to be stewards of the world.

And keeping this in mind, we might ask the question, what is the mission of the church in this gospel age? What is the *Missio Deo*, to put it in Latin?

What is the mission of God? Sounds more impressive in Latin, doesn't it? Well, of course, as Christians, we know where to turn to start answering that question.

Where else? But, of course, the end of Matthew, the Great Commission. What does that actually say? Matthew 28, 18 to 20. Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

So that's the starting point. All authority has been given to Jesus. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

[3:46] And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. So that's the commission, and it seems clear enough until you look into the details.

Then you start to ask questions. How exactly is Christ's authority to be exercised? Is it just through the church, or is it in some other way? Christ said, All authority on heaven and earth.

That seems to be wider than just in the church, doesn't it? And how exactly do you baptize a nation anyway? Kuyper seemed to think you can.

I think as Baptists would be a bit suspicious over that concept. But it's a good question, at least. It says, Go to all nations baptizing them. How do you baptize a nation?

And you notice, by the way, that it doesn't say preaching the gospel. It says teaching, making disciples of all nations.

[4:47] And so, what do we make of everything I have commanded you? It's not some sort of stripped-down, minimalist gospel, is it? You must include at least the Sermon on the Mount, which is the longest piece of what Christ has taught us, that we have recorded.

And as I said, that's to be taught to the nations, not just to the individual question, or even just to the church. Why do I say that?

Well, because Christ claims all authority on heaven and on earth. But unfortunately, perhaps in the 140 years or so since Kuyper, people have sort of changed their mind over some of this stuff, as to what is really meant here.

Well, again, I could get tied down for ages talking about various views of the millennium, but I'm not going to do that. But people's views of the millennium, dispensational views and so on, have changed thinking on this.

And some people raise this objection. The book of Revelation tells us that fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. The Great of Babylon, of course, being probably actually Rome, but more a metaphor for all the cities of this world.

[6:12] And it says, all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of our adulteries. That's from Revelation 18. So some people argue that, is there any point in intervening in the affairs of this world if it's destined for destruction?

Is it a hopeless task? I once heard somebody put it, is it just polishing the brass on a sinking ship? And many people have thought that.

Does history actually matter? Does culture actually matter? As I said, what is the meaning of the historical process? Does it have any meaning at all?

In fact, what's the meaning of anything, really? If God is sovereign and the world is fallen, why do anything at all? Well, if you start asking questions about what is the meaning of things, then you go to the book that's all about meanings, don't you?

So perhaps you'd like to open your Bibles at Ecclesiastes. Brenda's going to come and read in a minute. Let's just say a few words first. So Ecclesiastes is the book that's all about meanings.

[7:25] And you'll notice it starts in typically encouraging fashion. We've opened up chapter 1. Verse 2 says, Meaningless! Meaningless! Says the teacher.

Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. And this... Actually, the Hebrew is even more stark. It says something like, Vapor, vapor, says the preacher.

Vapor, vapor, vapor. You know in Hebrew, if you want something, say something's really important, you repeat it three times.

This verse repeats it five times. So what is Ecclesiastes? Well, it seems to be the slightly grumpy ramblings of a retired teacher, which is probably why I rather like it.

But actually, there is a bit more to it than that. But you have to read right through to chapter 12 before the teacher really lets on where he's coming from. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 11, says, The words of the wise are like goads.

[8:32] They're collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one shepherd. He's not really arguing that we all turn to despair and inactivity.

In fact, he's saying exactly the opposite. These are meant to goad you into action. The author of Ecclesiastes, as we've seen, is called the teacher, Koeleth, which may or may not have been Solomon.

People argue about that. But the real teacher of Ecclesiastes is the one shepherd. So, and in chapter three of Ecclesiastes, we get on to the concept of time, which is kind of important if you're thinking about history.

Time, somebody said, is just a device for stopping everything happening at once, which I think is perhaps a good way to think about it. We perhaps get less worried over these seven days of creation if we realise that the point of the seven days is that it doesn't all happen at once.

That part of the invention of creation is time itself. The evening and the morning, the first day. So, anyway, we're going to have a, looking in a bit more detail, at Ecclesiastes chapter three.

[9:51] So, I've asked Brenda to come and read. So, I was actually going to read from two verse seventeen to three verse seventeen, and then, or just briefly, four, and then just four verse one.

one. So, I just meant to say one thing before you start.

Just watch out for the buzzword that's all the way through, the mantra that's all the way through Ecclesiastes, under the sun. That's what he talks about there. Sorry, I meant to say that. Go on. Chapter two, verse seventeen. So, I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish.

[11:04] Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So, my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain.

Even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil.

This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for we're without him who can find or who can eat or find enjoyment. To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness.

[12:14] But to the sinner, he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

There is a time for everything. and a season for every activity under the heavens. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot.

A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh.

A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them. A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.

A time to search and a time to give up. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend.

[13:17] A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time.

He has also set eternity in the human heart. Yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.

That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil. This is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever.

Nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

Whatever is has already been and what will be has been before.

[14:22] And God will call the past to account. And I saw something else under the sun. In the place of judgment wickedness was there.

In the place of justice wickedness was there. I said to myself God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked for there will be a time for every activity a time to judge every deed.

And then chapter 4 verse 1. Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun.

I saw the tears of the oppressed and they have no comforter. Power was on the side of their oppressors and they have no comforter. Well more questions.

The teacher is very subtle. Under the sun everything is meaningless.

[15:37] But what about 3 verse 1? When he says under heaven is that just a synonym? Is that just another way of saying under the sun? Or is he saying something different?

Not sure I'm going to give you a definitive answer to that but I suggest that he may be saying something different because if you compare that with 3 verse let's find it again 3 verse 17 where this phrase is repeated but not the same God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked for there will be a time for every activity a time to judge every deed Hebrew repetition there but it's changed slightly so perhaps somebody only says under heavens he's not saying actually the same thing as under the sun he's saying perhaps he's saying let's look at it from the point of view of the heavenly viewpoint even that's not quite as simple as it seems but let's think about this under the sun says the teacher everything is chasing the wind meaning this is the teacher saying that every purpose even time is meaningless or is he saying that under heaven as time is taken account perhaps there can be purpose but even then he's so careful that he realizes even then you might have a problem with this you might have an objection because he reminds us in verses 14 and 15 that from God's perspective of course all history is one

God sees the end from the beginning but in his wisdom God has created time and as the image of God we have eternity in our hearts which as far as we can tell the other creatures with which we share this planet don't but we have eternity in our hearts but we live in the present and we live under heaven in fact we live under the sun and under the sun all is flux and change but says the preacher there is a time for every activity because God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked for there will be a time for every activity a time for every deed in other words God will judge what we do and that's what gives anything meaning politics or anything else otherwise as the teacher says it just all goes round and round who knows who you'll hand your work on to Solomon himself had this problem didn't he he was a wise man but his son was a bit of a fool managed to break up all the kingdom that his father had built but there is a time for every activity every deed history matters did you notice what's actually missing from that list in 3128 could be a rhetorical question but perhaps anybody like to say what's missing no ok perhaps I won't there is no actual religious activity at all in that list doesn't say anything about priests or Levites or sacrifices or even the temple nothing at all he's talking about everyday life here of course if we think about what the new testament says along those lines our thoughts are drawn to

Hebrews 13 8 aren't they Jesus Christ we're told is the same yesterday today and forever and yet the writer to Hebrews goes on to call us not to stasis and despair and say there's no point in doing anything but rather to action therefore go we read in Matthew 28 19 so the meaning of anything ultimately is what God makes of it but God has made us stewards over this world and he calls us to action and remind ourselves that everything we do not just the religious things but God will have something to say on the subject that was the right thing or God will judge every deed as it says but there is something a bit more specific that the teacher uses to go into action isn't it isn't there we find that in 316 and again it's repeated in chapter 4 verse 1 316 says it's one of the famous 316s this one and I saw something else under the sun in the place of judgment wickedness was there in the place of justice wickedness was there under the sun justice is removed it can't stand it must get undermined and yet we all presumably certainly the teacher thinks that it is all about judgment mishpat justice tzedek excuse my pronunciations of the Hebrew not a Hebrew scholar as you know language scholar but those are the words there judgment is mishpat and justice is tzedek and what do we find we find that there should have been law but we find lawlessness and that requires action doesn't it it seems to be what he's saying you can't tolerate this

[22:07] Proverbs reminds us of the duty of a ruler doesn't he he says speak up and judge fairly defend the rights of the poor and needy that's Proverbs 31 9 if you wanted to look at it the advice of King Lemuel's mother interestingly enough the delightful description of that beginning of chapter 31 but we need to be very careful here because what is being recommended here is not is not requirement for charity although the Bible certainly says we should care for the poor and the needy what is actually being asked for here is justice and if we turn to the

New Testament we get a convenient discussion definition really in 1 John 3 verse 4 1 John 3 verse 4 says simply everyone who sins breaks the law in fact sin is lawlessness and again there's actually a repetition there in the Greek it says the literal translation is something like everyone doing sin also

does lawlessness and sin is lawlessness that passage has caused endless argument actually and I'm not going to go into it but I think that verse at least is clear there's no distinction really between sin and lawlessness sin is lawlessness and doing lawlessness so let's think and move on a bit and think about the idea of law and you might like to turn to the other text

I put up here which is 1 Timothy 1 8 to 11 I'll read this myself because it's shorter 1 Timothy 1 verses 8 to 11 we know that the law is good if one uses it properly we also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels the ungodly and sinful the unholy and irreligious for those who kill their fathers or mothers for murderers for adulterers and perverts for slave traders and liars and perjurers and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which he entrusted to me clear enough isn't it he says law is not given for the righteous but for the unrighteous how are you going to know you're a sinner if you don't know the law but James reminds us there is actually a use of the law even for the believer

James 1 25 to 27 says the following the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this not forgetting what he has heard but doing it he will be blessed in what he does religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world James 1 that's verse 25 and then verse 27 note that phrase the perfect law gives freedom purpose of law isn't to bring slavery but freedom law is the antidote to tyranny not its instrument it's when there's no law that we get tyranny but also this passage is made clear that law is not a neutral thing it operates within a moral framework how can it be otherwise justice is ecclesiastes contrasted with wickedness law has to operate with some sort of moral framework because the absence of law is lawlessness and as John told us that's just another word for sin now clearly what have been discussed in these passages is

God's law and for the New Testament writers that would be essentially the Mosaic Code and perhaps the Prophets albeit adapted for a very different society even the Roman society was a long way from the late Bronze Age Agarian society from which Mosaic law was set out but the law is still relevant but does the law just apply to the church well hardly that seems to be the case in fact Paul tells us that it's there to restrain law breakers and rebels the ungodly and sinful the unholy and irreligious for God's people the law is a mirror a check that everything is it should be before you go out into the world but for the world itself the law is the instrument of judgment how can God condemn the wicked if there is no law in the world but of course there is a problem as for those [28:29] New Testament writers and this was true of course for the New Testament writers we don't live in a theocracy surely Roman law owed very little to the Mosaic code and yet in spite of that Peter could write 1 Peter 2 13 and 14 submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right that passage is actually quite remarkable when you sit and think about it because it's generally accepted that 1 Peter was written sometime around AD 62 to AD 64 and those who are good at history may know who was the Roman emperor at that time was actually Nero the tyrannical and half mad emperor

Peter probably wrote it from Rome but he finds it rather prudent to use a circumlocution to not actually use the term robe so at the end of the letter he says she who is in Babylon chosen together with you sends her your greetings as so does my son Mark I think he was assuming that the readers would understand the code that he was actually talking about Rome and yet in the midst of this tyranny and political oppression Peter could still claim that governors are sent by the emperor to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right it seems that he under common grace if that's what you want to call it even Roman law was basically the instrument of justice and you'll recall poor writing to Christians in Rome is even more explicit it says everyone must submit themselves to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established the authorities that exist have been established by

God again that's a quite remarkable claim if you think about it how was the Roman empire established by God and Paul even goes further because you remember that when threatened with murder by his fellow countrymen he actually appeals to Roman law he was a Roman citizen so had

a right of appeal to Caesar and he availed himself of that so the government the civil authority is appointed by God to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right and that's true even if the rulers do not fully acknowledge that themselves and of course it follows I think as guests that as far as any believer is able to influence the policy of government we should be influencing to do its job better under God the commission says we to teach the nations about the authority of Christ in a democracy the very least we can do is vote although that's very problematic nowadays deciding who to vote for many may be in a position to do more locally as Phil does of course in the lat or in some wider role certainly the view of the reformers Calvin and Cromwell and Wilberforce even Florence Nightingale that the law of the land should be subjected as far as possible to the law of God Abraham Kuyper said the same thing for the Dutch and these were fallible men and women and of course they made mistakes some cases you feel they kind of made it up as they went along and yet their aim was right surely but the whole process was and is fraught with difficulties who are you going to vote for and you may actually disagree even with other Christians and suppose Kate Forbes does become leader of the SNP what do you do if you're a Christian but a unionist do you vote for her because she's a Christian or do you vote against her because she's a nationalist we don't all agree on politics

I can't remember the guy's name but I think he might have said it here come and said it here but certainly somebody who used to lead one of the thinking talks or something of that ilk said he used to lead a bible study for politicians well for members of parliament and he said that when the Christians go into the division lobby they may go and vote in different directions but he felt they were all following the lead of the Holy Spirit which is an interesting way of looking at it but certainly the whole process is fought with difficulties politics it's been said is the art of the possible and often compromises had to be made so when Wilberforce and the abolitionists abolished slavery they compensated the slave owners paid them compensation sure that must have been a bit of a bitter pill but keep your eye on the ball that's the main object was to abolish slavery and if you had to make a few compromises around the edges so be it and just think what those reformers achieved what the

[34:52] West nowadays would like to deny but ultimately it can't is that the freedom that we have in the Western democracies was actually created by Christians and mostly by Protestant Christians although eventually the Catholics went along with it a bit as well but the Western democracies are built on Christian principles and as that Christian foundation starts to erode it becomes the result is not something better but largely chaos you have to sympathise really for Richard Dawkins don't you I mean he was arguing not even 10 15 years ago that if we all gave up religion and turned to rationality then everything would be much better and we'd all be at peace and agree with each other is more or less what he was saying now even he's had to admit how wrong he is it was we've descended not into rationality but into irrationality when words can mean anything they wanted to and truth is just the best set of lies that we can all agree on that freedom is now under threat so perhaps the time for war has come not suggesting we resort to violence like the

Puritans did in Cromwell's time of course but perhaps it is time to engage the enemy more seriously and we need to be a bit careful how we do it well in fact we need to be very careful how we do it because there are occasions when it's all gone horribly wrong and we also need to think very carefully because verses like James 5 27 and Ecclesiastes 4 do make it clear that the law has a particular responsibility to protect the poor and the powerless that runs all the way through the wisdom literature and indeed again in the New Testament we need to protect the poor and the powerless because these are the people who are often denied justice raw power needs to be restrained but so often you find a Marxist agenda has been shoved in under the radar and that redefines justice didn't we see it in the thinking of the

General Synod a few weeks back the gay people are a minority and so that makes them just virtuous by definition in Marxist thinking justice has come to mean social justice and the Marxist thinking it's the state of being oppressed being a victim that makes you virtuous the orphans and widows of James are not just in need of help which they are of course but they're good people just by virtue of being orphans and widows so justice becomes redefined becomes redefined as social

justice the removal of economic or political inequality but let's not fall into that trap it's very easy because it's quite a subtle distinction but a poor thief is still a thief just not very good at his job the orphans and widows are not virtuous by being orphans and widows they're just as much miserable sinners as the rest of us and when you start thinking otherwise you get into all sorts of contradictions and recently in the news we learned yet another instance of a black man being murdered by brutal police didn't we not again you think just a textbook case of critical race theory until you read the story a bit more closely and you realize that the three policemen or four policemen who were involved in that are black themselves they're not virtuous just by being black they're saying a poor thief is still a thief he's just not very good at his job

George Orwell recognized the dangers of this kind of thinking in the book *Animal Farm* I don't know if you've ever read it I have read it's a long time ago I did read *Animal Farm* and *1984* but a long time ago but the bits of it that still stick in my memory and you remember the great slogan in *Animal Farm* is two legs bad four legs good that was their slogan the farm animals rose against their human oppressors but soon that became a bit changed and the slogan became all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others and what do we hear today women are oppressed by men but trans women are oppressed by everyone so their rights trump those biological women as

Orwell realised very well in that book and in *1984* this kind of thinking is a shortcut to tyranny when has it been tried it was tried in Soviet Russia it was tried in Maoist China the result is always a disaster and yet people still keep coming up with variations on this same idea it's going to be right we'll get it right this time but there's not much sign of that happening but Orwell although he realised the danger didn't really have a coherent answer to the problem but James does it's the perfect law of God that brings freedom says James Proverbs says those who forsake the law praise the wicked but those who keep the law resist them evil men do not understand justice but those who seek the [41:48] Lord understand it fully that's Proverbs 28 4 and 5 but it's a challenging question certainly nowadays Abraham Kuyper managed to become Prime Minister of Holland Kate Forbes may or may not manage to become leader of the Scottish Assembly but there's a great deal of argument to go at it how Christians can get into politics without compromising their convictions or cravenly giving into the world it's a challenging question some of us know Christina who had an admin job here for a while she now worships with Angel's Brother Church she was a green councillor until she was asked to vote on gay marriage and she wouldn't do it and they threw her out of the party she was actually quite friendly with Caroline Lucas for a while but the division came between them and said politics is the art of the possible practical compromises will need to be made so Kate Forbes has said that she wouldn't vote in favour of gay marriage but if she became leader she wouldn't attempt to change it keep your eye on the ball perfect it said is the enemy of good I think it was Voltaire that said that Henry Ford says something very similar he said we don't want it perfect we want it Thursday politics is the art of the possible but above all we mustn't forget what Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 10 verses 4 and 5 said the following the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world on the contrary they have divine power to demolish strongholds so what's he talking about is he talking about putting down calling down fire from heaven or something not at all what he says is we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ so if we do go into politics if we do vote at least our aim is not power for ourselves but our aim is to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ and our main tool according to Paul at least is not to call down fire from heaven or even to just assert things and call it faith as it were according to Paul our main tool is logical debate the demolition of arguments to take on the those who argue for the wisdom of this world and defeat it does that sound unspiritual to you do you think of reasoning as having divine power to demolish strongholds and it seems that

Paul did do you think that somehow faith works in opposition to reason that just shows you've given in in fact to worldly thinking that's what Dawkins claimed of course that faith was believing things in spite of the evidence everybody quotes that famous passage from Alice the looking glass believing six impossible things before breakfast sometimes that's what Dawkins saw faith as but unfortunately some Christians seem to think that way as well I heard it quoted that 80% of American

evangelicals think that there was fraud in the election of Trump put not your trust in princes brothers and sisters never mind faith what you need is some healthy skepticism and of course the other thing about debate is that you might actually have to change your mind none of us know everything none of us get it right all the time you might have to admit you're wrong that's a hard thing to do there's a famous quote about the economist

John Maynard Keynes when a journalist pointed out something that is written in a recent paper contradicted something it said in an earlier paper a journalist pointed this out to which Maynard Keynes replied yes when somebody convinces me I'm wrong I change my mind what do you do you can get things wrong just think of Job's comforters I'm sure they were well meaning but what does the Lord say about them he said to Eliphaz the Temanite I'm angry with you and your two friends because you've not spoken to me of what is right as my servant Job has we need to think before we speak I was going to tell you the story of Hypatia and Alexandria as a case of when it can all go horribly wrong but I haven't got time

[47:50] I thought I wouldn't have time but google it sometime a few weeks ago I told you the story of Perpetua of the early martyr Hypatia also came to a sticky end but in very very different circumstances as a well I won't I must not tell you the story but look her up what actually happened and that skewed the view of the Catholic Church for a thousand years the view of the church politics so we can want to see how not to do it but we need to take a more positive perspective what did Jesus do when he was tempted by the devil or more specifically actually in Matthew it says Satan the accuser what did

Jesus do he argued with him didn't he he refuted his half truths and how did he do that he quoted the law of Moses more specifically Deuteronomy let me read it to finish the tempter came to Jesus and said if you are the son of God tell these stones to become bread Jesus answered it is written man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple if you are the son of God he said throw yourself down for it is written he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands and you will not strike your foot against a stone Jesus answered him again quoting Deuteronomy it's also written do not put the Lord your God to the test and then of course the final argument the point that Satan really wanted to make the devil took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor all this will give you he said for you will bow if you will bow down and worship me Jesus said to him quoting again quoting Deuteronomy away from me Satan for it is written worship the Lord your God and serve him only and the devil left him and angels came and attended him we can argue about whether what use we should make of the law in the secular arena but certainly Jesus used Deuteronomy to argue against the accuser well I'll stop there

I'm sure I've left you with a lot of questions and not really much time to answer them is anything anybody is dying to say or ask you talked about democracy being based on Christian principles just thinking back to the book that Heifer wrote as I remember it one of the things he said was that there are systems of government which are very hierarchical so you have the king the aristocracy and then at the bottom you have the plebs and that that's one system of working in a civil society and one of the things he said was that the gospel says that the ploughman or the street cleaner has as much access to

God as the king or royal family so it tends to flatten the way that we see society working so one of the things which I was helpful inside the fact he said was whether possible works in society it tends to reduce these hierarchies and reduce a system where everybody is valued and everybody has a degree of input into the way society is run and people claim that the Greeks invented democracy but of course the democracy of the Greeks was a very different thing what the Greeks believed in was government by an elite the philosophers would be those who had time to sit around and debate things because of course the slaves and the women did all the work that's not the sort of democracy that the reformers built again

[53:04] C.S. Lewis said there's two arguments you can give for democracy one is that everybody has so much wisdom that they all need to be listened to and the other is that nobody dare be trusted with absolute power because we're all miserable sinners or something along those lines

I mean both those arguments have some weight but probably the latter one more so nobody can be trusted with absolute power!

Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah They can't do everything at once but also they have to look after every constituent so that whoever they are and however immoral or amoral they are they have to look after every constituent so that even they might not agree with that person perhaps a gay person they still have to look after them Yeah I guess it means it depends what you mean by look after them don't they have people yeah and everybody should I mean that much is true that everybody needs to be treated with respect and you know not and we don't propagate hate Jesus told us to love our enemies when we forget that that violence comes but don't you find that's exactly what's happening in the or not happening rather in the world around us today people have forgotten that Jesus said love your enemies people just shout the people who shout loudest are the people who get heard and the result actually is chaos it's not even as though the internet always cancels people I mean I noticed that there was a sort of anti-woke demonstrations and with school girls who had been told they're not allowed to wear skirts anymore and they used TikTok to or not allowed to go to the toilet during lesson times or something like that the details and they managed to use TikTok to organise protestations demonstrations against it one school actually had to close because the students just wouldn't come in whether you think that's a good thing or a bad thing I don't know but what's certainly the case is that the result is chaos and there I think there is an opportunity which maybe didn't even exist 10 or 15 years ago because people are actually beginning to see now that the result is chaos that even even that quote I said even Wilberforce seemed to believe in some concept of natural law and of course the two kingdom party if you like among reformed Christians seem to still maintain some concept of natural law personally it seems to me the only law you find in nature is the law of survival of the fittest domination by the alpha male and the apex predator so they don't mean that by natural law presumably they mean something else but maybe what I mean I think the idea of natural law was invented in the enlightenment and people thought well there's something built into humans that have some idea of law and maybe there is to some extent a conscience but it doesn't take long to degrade once it's basic principles have been undermined again that's what Paul says at the beginning of Romans isn't it that God gave them up to wickedness in Genesis where Abraham goes to Egypt and Pharaoh fancies Abraham's wife and then everything goes wrong Pharaoh if I remember correctly reviews Abraham and he said why did you let him make that mistake because it's wrong tell somebody he did he knew that it was wrong so there is that there is that but because it's we don't know exactly what he did do but Egypt wasn't an atheist society

[58:13] Egypt in many ways was probably more religious than the Hebrews in terms of actual rituals and power structures and things so yeah yeah maybe maybe there is maybe there is but he also says in the beginning of Romans how that degrades and God gives them over to wickedness I think we've got that in our current local political scene so if you think of the authority and our own perhaps we think of Caroline Limpas so my take on Caroline Limpas is I don't think she's a corrupt politician I don't think she's in it I don't think she would dream of cheating or lying I think she's a caring woman but she would be very strong on women's reproductive rights she would say therefore she would back abortion she would be very strong on equality therefore she would back same sex marriage and that sort of thing so there's a sort of a mixture of things and it's a funny old mixture isn't it so

I'm sure Paul was that care but the degraded or mis perception of human sexuality must be something that's wrong and Paul was not pleased with that no it becomes self contradictory I mean I love the book of Ecclesiastes it just appeals to my way of thinking but the teacher looks at life and says that at the same time it's both hilariously comic and unbearably tragic doesn't it you know it's funny the way it all goes round and round and people think things are important and they're not really and they're just nothing it's both comic and tragic and I think that's what you I agree with you I think Caroline Lucas is a woman of real integrity but she you know epimenides will get you in the end self contradiction will get you in the end if you don't well probably not in the past but I do wonder whether the present time politicians have been a political system yeah but well I mean it's true but I wonder if there is an opportunity now because Kate Forbes isn't being totally

ruled out is she people are prepared to say you know well okay we know she has these views but we need some sense we need some sense we need some!

maybe criticise the Christian who was the Lib Dem guy wasn't there Tim Farrell he's written a book I gather although I haven't read it yeah but even that was what five or ten years ago I wonder whether the world has actually changed since then even and that there may be an opportunity now that there wasn't then people are beginning to see how chaotic things are getting one of the things you said earlier on I think you touched on and I haven't thought about this as a Christian who wants to respect the office of civil government even if strongly disagree with all this life whatever it is in that that's quite difficult sometimes isn't and my son explained he must have heard something in school because I told him if you come tonight

I said it's not appropriate about politics and he started saying politics I hate Boris Johnson and he started saying something about Boris Johnson and I said to my person he said you must!

[62:50] And then they'd end up sniping at each other Corbyn and left winger accused of being anti-Jewish and you know people end up I mean what's TERF what's the acronym trans-exclusionary radical feminist is the latest swear word or whatever yeah well even Jesus himself said render to Caesar what is Caesar's didn't he in fact he even said about the Pharisees didn't he he said listen to what they say because they sit in the seat of Moses but don't do what they do because they don't practice what they preach well it's probably 8 o'clock already I was going to spend some time in prayer but can I have perhaps a volunteer to pray and then have we got time to sing another song or should we think we should just okay we'll do it that way so can I have a volunteer somebody like to volunteer or should I no nobody wants to volunteer okay well you're Daniel yeah okay so let's sing then we'll sing 920 I think it is I'll turn myself off because you don't want to listen to you