

INTRODUCTION 引言

Election day is two days away. Many people have been waiting for this event for two years, four years or even longer. A brother shared his personal experience in one election year. He was getting in line to vote. The man in front of him appeared impatient. He turned and chatted with the brother, saying: “This is taking forever. Do you have to wait this long to vote in your birth-country?” The brother replied without missing a beat: “We’ve been waiting for several thousand years, and we’re still waiting.” Without a doubt, it is a privilege to express your opinions by casting a ballot. Some of you have voted already. Others will do so on Tuesday. How do you decide on the candidates and other voting issues? Psalm 33 gives us some insight on the matter. Our study will focus on comparing men’s leadership with God’s ruling. The writer tells us that a country is strong when people recognize God as their ultimate King.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Men’s Regime 人的政權

First, the author states that men’s regime is imperfect. He highlights two issues. Problem number 1: rulers rely on their own wisdom. Read verses 10-11 again: **10 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.** The word “nations” in verse 10 refer to foreign countries that do not believe in God. When leaders do not admit God as their Lord, they will make policies based on human wisdom. Those decisions are more than likely limited in scope and are short-sighted. Problem number 2: men’s regime relies on military power. Look at verses 16-17: **16 The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. 17 The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.** A country needs the armed force for security. When leaders do not seek God’s protection, they will only depend on an army and weapons. More soldiers and horses will give people a peace of mind. In sum, men’s regime is inadequate and short-lived. People who put their hope on earthly leaders will be disappointed too. The Israelites in the Old Testament did not realize that until it was too late. God appointed Samuel as their leader. People worried when Samuel was getting old and his two sons did not have good conduct. They came to Samuel and asked for a king like what foreign nations had. God told Samuel the real reason behind their request in 1 Samuel 8:7 – **...“Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.”** People wanted to replace the Heavenly King with a human king. Samuel warned people that their king would order them to serve him and levy heavy tax on them. They literally replied: “We don’t care! Give us a king.” Hence, Saul was crowned as the first king of Israel. He did some good things at first. But Saul turned into a self-centered and ruthless leader soon afterward. It was a mixed bag for the next 400 years. There were some godly kings in Israel. But the rest were wicked leaders who no longer followed God. Problems like idol-worship, power-struggle, exploitation of the poor and foreign invasion all occurred. It looks like plots in an ancient dynasty soap opera. Israel was eventually split into two

nations, and both countries were defeated by enemies later. It is a sad ending when people put their hope in a human leader instead of God. Granted, a country needs some form of government to oversee its people. The Bible tells us that the authority to rule comes from God. Romans 13:1 says: **Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.** Paul is talking about the Roman government when he mentions the authorities. Even a secular and brutal regime gets its power from God. Caesars claimed themselves to be gods. Many of them were hostile to Christianity. God put that system in place for His purposes. You can think of other ungodly leaders in history and even in today's world. Ultimately, God gives them authority. Rulers will succeed if they acknowledge God as their Master. A Biblical model of management should be God at the top, rulers then citizens. The U.S. has a democratic government. There are checks and balances to minimize abuse of power. The idea is that no one person can do everything. Group discussion and negotiation can lead to better decisions. In view of all that, what should we look for as we elect leaders? Let me suggest three criteria. First, **humility**. Do the candidates appear to be capable and confident without being prideful? Do they admit their mistakes or will they make excuse and blame others? Second, **integrity**. Do they fulfill their promises based on past records? Do they obey the same laws they support? Third, **accountability**. Do they truly care about the needs of people? Do they have a sincere heart to serve them? We need to ask God for discernment before we cast our votes. We need to separate objective information from personal opinions. We need to make decisions according to facts and not feelings. We should also pray that leaders who win out will fear God. Ultimately, they will report to God for their works. No matter how the election results look like, we trust that God is still in control.

2. God's Reign 神的管治

While men's regime is imperfect, God's reign is perfect. His ruling is also absolute. The psalmist says in verses 4-5: **4 For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.** We see a few words that describe God's character. "Upright," "righteousness" and "justice" are related words. They share general meanings of correct and fair. It is like when we say that every person is equal before the law regardless of his/her background. The word "faithfulness" means true or stable. God's standards of right and wrong never change with time and situation. We also see the word "love" in verse 5. We said last week that this Hebrew term is related to God's covenant. God will fulfill His promises because of the covenant He made with His people. God gathered the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. He gave instructions to Moses in Exodus 19:5-6 – **"5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."** God adopted the Israelites as His people, then He gave them the Ten Commandments and related laws. That covenant is like the constitution of a country. Based on the sovereignty of a nation, laws are written for its citizens to obey. Likewise, the Old Testament Law is meaningful because God established an eternal relationship with His people. The Law reflects God's character we mentioned earlier. God's reign is fair, stable and full of love. The Law has three main sections: civil, moral and ceremonial. Civil laws ensure an upright society. Rich and poor people, citizens and foreigners are treated equally. Moral laws maintain the right of everyone. It is the foundation for court proceedings. Innocent people will be protected, while law-breakers

will be punished. Ceremonial laws govern religious rituals. For example, they give instructions on what offerings to present and how to observe various Jewish festivals. Modern society is very different from the Old Testament world. Nowadays, we do not need to follow the same specific laws. For instance, we do not have to present animal sacrifice when we worship in the church and we can freely eat food that is considered unclean in the dietary law. However, today's laws are in principle consistent with Biblical truths. People are born to be self-centered. Laws preserve the rights of every person. Due to the sinful nature of humans, there are laws related to abortion and homosexual relationship, etc. Those conducts are obviously contrary to the Bible. Therefore, no country is truly a Christian nation. Regardless, we must obey the laws of the land because our government receives ruling power from God. We submit to God by submitting to our leaders. But Christians should keep in mind their dual-citizenship. You are the resident of the country that issues your passport. But followers of Jesus Christ are also citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. God sends them into the world to display His virtues. As such, believers should use the Bible as a guideline when filling out the ballot. This country also gives us the freedom to express our disagreements with the government in a respectful manner. Besides, we enjoy the liberty to worship God without any fear of religious oppression. Despite all those privileges, no earthly government is ideal. No law can protect the rights of every person. There will always be injustice in the society too. We should pray for our leaders whether or not we agree with them. That is a command from the Bible. Ultimately, we put our hope in God. Perfection can only be found in heaven. That is where God's reign will completely be fulfilled without any obstacle. Apostle John paints a picture in Revelation 21:3 – **And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”** This promise of a relationship with God is the same as what God told Moses on Mount Sinai. In heaven, the blessing will not be restricted to the Israelites, but it will be extended to all believers all over the world. There will be great joy, peace and contentment when God rules over us.

CONCLUSION 結論

The writer tells us that a country is strong when people recognize God as their ultimate King. A few days later, the U.S. will determine some future leaders. Other than this November election, the Bible says that God has another election. It is not about picking officials in heaven. God elected those He intended to save before He created everything. Christians are God's elect. God chose them from all over the world to be His people. Jesus saves them from eternal condemnation. The Holy Spirit preserves them when they are still in the world. God declares those people as righteous. They pledge allegiance to the country of their citizenship. At the same time, they profess loyalty to God. There is no application process for that status. Rather, they must claim Jesus as their Lord and King by faith. They follow Jesus' ruling in the world and in eternity. The anthem of these righteous people can be “He Is Lord.” The lyrics say: “He is Lord, He is Lord. He is risen from the dead and He is Lord. Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

INTRODUCTION 引言

距離選舉日還有兩天。很多人為了這件事情已經等待了兩年、四年甚至更長。一位弟兄分享了他的一次選舉中的個人經歷。他正在排隊投票。前面的一個人等得不耐煩。他轉過身來與弟兄聊天。他說：「什麼時候才輪到我？你需要等那麼久才能在你出生的國家投票嗎？」弟兄連想都不用想便回答：「我們已經等了幾千年，現在還在等。」毫無疑問，透過投票表達你的意見是一份權利。有些人已經投票了，其他人將會在周二投票。你會如何決定候選人和其他議案？詩篇 33 篇給了我們一些關於這些問題的指引。我們的學習將集中在比較人的領導與神的統治。作者告訴我們，當人們承認神是他們最終的王時，一個國家就是強大的。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Men's Regime 人的政權

首先，作者指出人的政權是不完美的。他強調了兩個問題。問題一：統治者依靠自己的智慧。請再讀 10-11 節：**10 耶和華使列國的籌算歸於無有，使眾民的思念無有功效。11 耶和華的籌算永遠立定；他心中的思念萬代常存。**第 10 節的「列國」是指不信神的國家。當領袖不承認神是他們的主時，他們就會根據人的智慧制定政策。這些決定很可能是有限且短視的。問題二：人的政權依靠軍事力量，請看第 16-17 節：**16 君王不能因兵多得勝；勇士不能因力大得救。17 靠馬得救是枉然的；馬也不能因力大救人。**一個國家需要國防力量來保障安全。當領袖不尋求神的保護時，他們只能依靠軍隊和武器。兵馬多了，人就覺得安心。總而言之，人的政權是不足且短暫的。那些把希望寄託在地上領袖的人也會失望。舊約中的以色列人並沒有意識到這一點，直到為時已晚。神安排撒母耳為他們的領袖。當撒母耳年事已高，他的兩個兒子品行不好時，人們感到擔憂。他們來見撒母耳，要求像外邦人一樣設立一個王。神在撒母耳記上 8:7 告訴撒母耳他們的請求背後的真正原因：**「百姓向你說的一切話，你只管依從；因為他們不是厭棄你，乃是厭棄我，不要我作他們的王。」**人們想用地上的王取代天上的王。撒母耳警告他們，他們的王將命令他們侍奉他，並向他們徵收重稅。他們的回答是：「我們不在乎！給我們立一個王吧。於是，掃羅成為以色列第一位王。一開始他做了一些好事。但掃羅很快就變成了一個自我中心並殘酷的領袖。接下來的 400 年裡，情況可謂是龍蛇混雜。以色列有一些敬虔的王。但其餘的都是敗壞的領袖，他們不再跟隨神。於是拜偶像、權力鬥爭、剝削窮人、外國侵略等問題都發生了。看起來就像古代宮廷劇中的情節。

以色列最終分裂為兩個國家，後來兩國都先後被敵人滅掉。當人們把希望寄託在地上的領袖而不是神身上時，那是一個悲慘的結局。誠然，一個國家需要某種形式的政府來管理人民。聖經告訴我們，統治的權柄是來自神。羅馬書 13:1 說：**在上有权柄的，人人當順服他，因為沒有權柄不是出於神的。凡掌權的都是神所命的。**當保羅提到權柄時，他指的是羅馬政府。即使是世俗和殘暴的政權也從神那裡獲得權力。凱撒大帝自稱為神。他們有許多皇帝敵視基督信仰。神設立這個政權有祂的心意。你可以想到歷史上甚至現今世界一些不敬虔的領袖。最終，神給了他們權柄。如果統治者承認神是他們的主宰，他們就會成功。聖經的管理模式應該是神在最上面，再來是領袖，然後是人民。美國有一個民主政府。有製衡機制以減低濫用權力。其根據是沒有一個人可以做所有事情。小組討論和談判可以帶來更好的決策。有鑑於此，我們在選舉領袖時應該注意什麼？讓我提出三個標準。第一，謙卑。候選人是否表現出才幹、自信而不驕傲？他們會承認自己的錯誤，還是會找藉口責怪別人？第二，誠信。根據過去的記錄，他們是否言出必行？他們遵守自己所支持的法律嗎？第三，負責任。他們真的關心人們的需要嗎？他們有一顆真誠服務人民的心嗎？當我們投票之前，必須祈求神賜給我們分辨能力。我們需要將客觀資訊與個人觀點分開。我們需要根據事實而不是憑感覺來做決定。我們也應該為獲選的領袖禱告，使他們能敬畏神。最終，他們需要為自己的工作向神交帳。無論選舉結果如何，我們相信神仍然在掌權。

2. God's Reign 神的管治

人的政權是不完美的，但神的管治是完美的。祂的裁決也是絕對的。詩人在第 4-5 節中說：**4 因為耶和華的言語正直；凡他所做的盡都誠實。5 他喜愛仁義公平；遍地滿了耶和華的慈愛。**我們看到一些描述神的品格的字。「正直」、「仁義」、「公平」是相關的用詞。它們具有正確和公平的一般含義。這就像我們說法律面前人人平等，無論人們的背景如何。「誠實」（或翻譯為信實）的意思是真實或穩固。神對錯的標準永遠不會隨著時間和情況而改變。我們在第 5 節中也看到了「慈愛」這個字。我們上週說過，這個希伯來文的字是關於神的愛。因著神與子民所立的約，祂必然遵守祂的承諾。神將以色列人聚集在西乃山腳下。祂在出埃及記 19:5-6 中向摩西發出指示：**5 「如今你們若實在聽從我的話，遵守我的約，就要在萬民中作屬我的子民，因為全地都是我的。6 你們要歸我作祭司的國度，為聖潔的國民。」**這些話你要告訴以色列人。」神接納以色列人為祂的子民，然後給了他們十誡和相關的律法。這個盟約就像一個國家的憲法。根據國家的主權，法律被制定，供人民遵守。同樣，因著神與子民建立的永恆關係，舊約律法才產生意義。律法反映了我們前面提到的神的品格。神的管治是公平、穩固且充滿愛的。律法分為三個主要部份：民事、道德和禮儀。民事法確保社會穩定。富人和窮人、公民和外國人都受到平等對待。道德法維護每個人的權利，它是法庭審訊的基礎。無辜者將受到保護，違法者將受到懲罰。禮儀法管轄宗教儀式。例如，它們告訴人要獻上什麼祭物以及

如何慶祝各種猶太節期。現代社會與舊約世界有很大不同。如今，我們不需要遵守同樣的具體規條。例如，我們在教會敬拜時不必獻動物為祭，也可以隨意吃舊約律法定為不潔淨的食物。然而，今天的法律原則上是符合聖經真理的。人生來就是自我中心的。法律保護每個人的利益。由於人類的罪性，有一些關於墮胎、同性戀等法例。那些行為顯然是違反聖經的。因此，沒有一個國家是真正的基督教國家。無論如何，我們必須遵守國家的法律，因為政府是從神那裡獲得統治權。我們透過順服我們的領袖來順服神。但基督徒應該牢記他們的雙重國籍。你是簽發護照國家的居民。但耶穌基督的跟隨者也是天國的公民。神差派他們到世上展示祂的美德。因此，信徒在填寫選票時應該以聖經為指導。這個國家也賦予我們自由，以尊敬的方式表達與政府的分歧。此外，我們享有敬拜神的自由，不用擔心宗教迫害。儘管擁有所有這些特權，但世上的政府並不是理想的。沒有法律可以保障每個人的權利。社會上也總會有不公平的事情發生。無論我們是否同意我們的領袖，我們都應該為他們禱告。那是聖經中的命令。最終，我們把希望寄託在神身上。完美只能在天堂找到。在那裡，神的管治將毫無攔阻地完全實現。使徒約翰在啟示錄 21:3 中描繪了一幅圖畫：我聽見有大聲音從寶座出來說：「看哪，神的帳幕在人間。他要與人同住，他們要作他的子民。神要親自與他們同在，作他們的神。」這種與神建立關係的應許和神在西乃山上對摩西所說的話是一樣的。在天上，祝福不僅臨到以色列人，而且將延伸到全球的所有信徒。當神統治我們時，我們會有極大的喜樂、平安和滿足。

CONCLUSION 結論

作者告訴我們，當人們承認神是他們最終的王時，一個國家就是強大的。幾天之後，美國將確定一些未來的領袖。除了這次的十一月選舉之外，聖經說神還有另一次揀選。我們不是要選舉天堂的官員。神在創造萬物之前就揀選了祂打算要拯救的人。基督徒是神的選民。神從世界各地揀選了他們作為祂的子民。耶穌將他們從永恆的定罪中拯救出來。當他們還在世上時，聖靈一直保守他們。神稱這些人為義人。他們效忠於自己的國家。同時，他們也對神忠誠。那個資格沒有申請程序。人們必須憑信心宣稱耶穌是他們的主和王。他們在世上和永恆裡跟隨耶穌的統治。這些義人的國歌可以是「祂是神」。歌詞說：「祂是神，祂是神。基督已從死裡復活，祂是神。萬膝當跪拜，萬口當承認基督耶穌是神。」