

The Gables – Who Rules Over Us?

Ice Breaker –

As of this moment in September 2015, there are fourteen serious candidates seeking the Republican presidential nomination and five serious candidates publicly seeking the Democratic presidential nomination. Donald Trump is leading in the polls for the Republicans and Hillary Clinton is leading in the polls for the Democrats. Who will become the nominee for each party? Who will become our next president? Who will become the leader of the free world?

Lesson –

Rick: Hey Donna. You've been watching the 2016 Republican presidential debates lately, haven't you?

Donna: Oh, yes! They're fascinating. I like all the Republican candidates. It's hard to figure out which one is the best.

Rick: Why are you so interested in the debates?

Donna: There's so much drama and so much at stake. It's possible for any of them to win. The stakes are so high. We'll be determining who will become the next leader of the United States, the most powerful nation on earth.

Rick: Do you think it's just up to the American people to choose the next president?

Donna: Of course! Who else would it be up to?

Rick: God can intervene, if he wishes.

- Psalm 33:10-11 says, "The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."
- Proverbs 16:4 says, "The LORD works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster."

Donna: But I thought each of us has free will?

Rick: Of course we do. There are, of course, times when God allows us to choose our own leader, even if it isn't what's best for us.

- Samuel 8:1-7 says, "When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a

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king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.” But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.”

- The point is that God’s active or permissive will is involved in choosing world leaders.

Donna: I heard somewhere that the devil is involved in controlling the world too. Is that true?

Rick: Absolutely.

- Matthew 4:8-9 records the following (this is after Jesus had been fasting in the desert for forty days): “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”
- This verse confirms that the kingdoms of the world belong to the devil. Here’s another verse that corroborates this...
- 1 John 5:18-19 says, “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

Donna: While it’s a shock to find out that the world we live in is controlled by the devil, it’s also reassuring to know that God protects his people from the devil.

Rick: Yes. God keeps His children safe.

Donna: But don’t bad things sometimes happen to Christians? Look at how Christians are being persecuted throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East!

Rick: Of course. The world is under control of the devil, but we can take comfort in the fact that the devil has to ask God’s permission before he can afflict us.

- Job 1:6-12 says the following: “One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your

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face.” The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Donna: The devil rules over nations, but does he try to rule over individuals too?

Rick: Absolutely.

- Non-Christians are ruled by the devil even though they may not realize it. 2 Timothy 2:25-26 says, “Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will..”
- The devil tries to rule over Christians too. He tries to make us think we aren’t really God’s adopted sons and daughters, and seeks to make us unfruitful in our ministries, whatever they may be.
- 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
- James 4:7-8a says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

Donna: If Satan controls the world, then he must also control major institutions, such as the government and the media. Is that true?

Rick: “Yes,” for the most part, but it really depends on who’s in power. Some leaders give in to the promptings of Satan while others do not.

Donna: That raises an interesting question, if the devil controls the world, do we always have to obey the laws of our government?

Rick: We should obey our government’s laws as long as they do not conflict with God’s laws.

- Acts 5:25-29 says, “Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!

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Donna: Would a current-day example of this be the Rowan County Clerk in Kentucky who refused to allow her signature to appear on marriage licenses for gay couples?

Rick: Leviticus 18, 1 Corinthians 6, Romans 1 and Revelation 21 all state that homosexual behavior is sin. The county clerk could not, in good conscience, condone this behavior because it conflicts with her religious beliefs.

Donna: Would abortion be another example of the law of the United States conflicting with the law of God?

Rick: Although the laws of the United States allow abortion, the Bible stands in principle against it. Here are some verses that point to our existence as persons in God's eyes before we are born:

- Jeremiah 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...”
- Psalm 139:13,16a – “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb... Your eyes saw my unformed body...”
- Isaiah 49:1b – “Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name...”

Therefore, according to the Bible, abortion kills a person, not a glob of tissue.

Donna: What else tries to rule over us?

Rick: Our Old Nature.

Donna: What do you mean by “Old Nature?”

Rick: When we became a Christian, God forgave our sins and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts. As Christians, we strive to obey God and please him out of our love for Him, but sometimes we stumble and sin along the way. There is a war raging within each of us, a war between our old nature and our new nature, if we are, in fact, Christians. Each nature desires to rule over the other.

- Romans 7:14-25 says, “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that

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does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Donna: What are the implications of all this for us as Christians? How should we live?

Rick: Although we aren't persecuted as severely in the United States as Christians are in other countries, there are, nonetheless, forces waging war against our souls, trying to rule over us, enslave us, and keep us from accomplishing God's will on earth. Our enemies include the devil and his minions, our government, the media, and our old nature. We need to fight against each of these forces with the weapons God has provided to us. These weapons are prayer and the Bible. The only entity that should rule over us is God.

Donna: How do we make sure that the only thing ruling over us is God and not someone else?

Rick:

- If we're a Christian, we should have a quiet time with God each morning that includes prayer and Bible reading. This will ensure we stay in tune with Him and out of tune with the forces conspiring against us.
- If we're not a Christian, we need to become one. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6). So, Jesus is the only way to heaven. We need to tell God we're sorry for the things we've done wrong, be willing to turn away from these things, with His help, and ask Him to forgive our sins and save us from the penalty of our sins, which is hell.
- Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." We hope you'll do this today.