

Should We Choose a Liberal or Mormon President?

My goal is not to tell you who to vote for or against, or even whether you should vote or stay home. This subject involves more than just this upcoming presidential election. I am concerned with principles of how Christians should generally view the democratic process.

Even though the Bible was written in a time of kings and despots (and not bipartisan elections), we can look to Christian principles to create a framework on how we evaluate conflicting candidates in a democratic election. It may be that we will never have a near-perfect candidate (and we might not even agree on what such a candidate would look like), but there should be ways to evaluate the conflicts we face as we make our decisions.

Accordingly, I have tried to create a framework for how we can go about analyzing these decisions.

This coming November conservative evangelical voters may have a hard time choosing whom to vote for. For some it is not a win-lose but a lose-lose situation because of the issues involved with both major candidates for president.

Biblically speaking, the election of a president (or king) is hugely important, as we can see by just a cursory reading of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. The nations of Israel and Judah either prospered and served God because their king was godly, or the king's ungodliness of the caused the nation to turn away from God to false gods and idolatry.

It has been my opinion since the 2008 election that God gave our nation the president we deserve based on our backslidden condition. There is biblical precedent for this. For example: God gave the children of Israel Saul as their king in spite of

the prophet Samuel's warnings in 1 Samuel 8 and 9—and also Romans 1:24 which teaches us that sometimes God gives people up to the lusts of their hearts to eat the fruit of their cravings until judgment comes to them.

How does a **conservative evangelical** vote when one candidate, President Obama, has a pro-choice stance on abortion, advocates for same-sex marriage and holds other values conservatives deem detrimental, as well as the fact he will probably be in a position to pick another liberal Supreme Court justice, which will then bring the balance of power back to the liberal justices who currently are outnumbered five to four? (The Supreme Court justices serve for life and may be in a position in the near future to decide the fate of the Defense Of Marriage Act, abortion and other issues important to social conservatives.)

Voting for the next president would be easy if there was a clear alternative that held to orthodox Christian values. But what if the candidate on the other side was an atheist, Jehovah's Witness, Muslim, Mormon or a person who held many conservative social values but totally disagreed with them regarding major theological issues like the lordship and divinity of Jesus, the existence of God, Shariah law and the inspiration of the Bible?

For example, Mitt Romney—who clinched the Republican presidential nomination on Tuesday—is akin to a bishop in the Mormon Church, which espouses religious beliefs that trouble evangelical Christians. These Mormon beliefs include: Jesus being merely a created god in process to becoming God, just like other human beings who believe; baptisms for those already dead to secure eternal life for them; polygamy; and the Book of Mormon being viewed as Scripture equal with or superior to the Bible. Also, until the 1970s Mormons didn't allow people with dark skin in their temples.

This is not the first time evangelical voters have been

troubled by a candidate for religious reasons. Previous examples include when John F. Kennedy ran for president against Richard Nixon in 1960. Many Protestants were concerned Kennedy would be beholden to the pope because JFK was the first-ever Roman Catholic presidential candidate.

Hence, evangelical believers are concerned that if Romney becomes president, it will give Mormonism—which is widely recognized as a cult by Christians and not part of true Christianity—cultural credibility and will no longer be viewed as some strange cult but become part of the mainstream, which will aid their missionary endeavors and hurt the advance of the **gospel of Christ** long term. Not only that, but they fear he will also help to position other Mormons in high places of influence, whether as powerful lobbyists or as policymakers and elected officials.

Consequently, even though Romney may hold values more in line with conservative principles, these evangelical conservatives think the choice ultimately comes down to whether we are putting the **gospel** first or putting our nation first—a position conservative Christians must dread because they integrate their faith so much with American nationalism.

Another option for conservative Christian voters is to be faithful with whatever God has put in front of them in the short term. That is to say, go with the conservative over the liberal irrespective of religious affinity because we are not electing a theologian but a president. Thus, Mormon or other theologies will be limited through the grid of our present political structure and will only express itself in values common to all conservatives—values such as **free speech** and **religious liberty**, the traditional view of marriage between one man and one woman, and the sanctity of life from conception. Therefore, some conservative Christians may still opt to vote for the non-Christian conservative as a matter of stewardship regarding what's best for the country without speculating on the long-term harmful trajectory of a cult or

false religion going mainstream.

We also don't know what God is up to behind the scenes in Mormonism and in other cults. For example, some years ago I heard from a Mormon that a great revival broke out in their camp, resulting in tens of thousands coming to true faith in Christ as Lord. This **revival** came about because of an emphasis on reading the Bible instead of the Book of Mormon.

A pessimistic—but possibly more realistic view—is that God is using many of our governmental leaders to further judge America for turning our backs from Him as a nation. Church history has shown us nations that are prosperous with a stable government rarely—if ever—turn to God for help. Perhaps God is going to allow more political, economic and natural disasters to come our way so that, in our disorientation, we will experience a stronger church that will arise to rebuild among the rubble, just as the fourth century church did after Rome fell.

I hope and pray it doesn't come to this. But in many ways it looks as though the USA is really now a divided nation, with half the nation hardening its hearts toward God and favoring humanism, another 25 percent with strong Christian values, and another 25 percent that vote merely as fiscal conservatives but are agnostic when it comes to abortion and same-sex marriage (the libertarian position).

Christians with a strong nationalistic tendency believe God is not through with the United States and will continue to use the USA to fund missions and plant churches with its vast resources that will expand His kingdom; they can't picture a world or a Christian faith in which America is not the world's global superpower.

Others, like myself (although I am strongly patriotic and love this nation), are beginning to wonder if America can be redeemed in its present form.

Liberals and political pundits are sitting back with great interest as they see how evangelicals will navigate through the upcoming election. One thing is for sure: The church in America is radically shifting to adapt to this changing cultural environment. Thirty years ago Christianity was the dominant force in this nation. Now we live in a post-Christian materialistic culture. In 10 years our nation will look radically different than it is today, for better or for worse. Nations and kingdoms will come and go, but the **kingdom of God** will continue to advance with or without America as a superpower!

Finally, no candidate has fully earned my vote or endorsement as I have grave concerns about the two main candidates. But I will eventually vote for the person closest to my positions regardless of their orthodoxy—or lack thereof—because we are not electing a theologian or bishop, but the next president. I hope that as the presidential debates take place they will make it easier for all people to vote for the most qualified candidate as their positions become more acute.

Joseph Mattera *has been in full-time ministry since 1980 and is currently the Presiding Bishop of Christ Covenant Coalition and Overseeing Bishop of Resurrection Church in New York, a multiethnic congregation of 40 nationalities that has successfully developed numerous leaders and holistic ministry in the New York region and beyond. [Click here to visit his website.](#)*