

Abstention from Government & Political Process

Under the Mosaic Law, participation in government was encouraged and perfectly acceptable. Remember, this Law functioned to address the needs of national Israel and their physical kingdom. The New Testament Church is distinct from Israel in that it's a **spiritual** Kingdom governed by **spiritual** principles. As such, its recourse is neither physical nor political. There are several reasons for this:

No Longer Citizens in the World

When individuals are converted to faith a change of allegiance takes place. Such become members of a spiritual Kingdom and are called to mind the affairs that forward God's agenda, not man's:

*No man that warreth **entangleth himself with the affairs of this life**; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2Ti 2:4).*

*If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Col 3:1).*

*For our **citizenship** is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Php 3:20).*

*Now therefore **ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God** (Eph 2:19).*

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to the strangers** scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pe 1:1).*

*Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (1 Pe 2:11).*

As members of Christ, we are no longer "strangers and foreigners" in God's Kingdom. Yet this change automatically produces a reverse action. We thus become "strangers and pilgrims" in the world, and terminate our former way of life. For this reason, Jesus made

it clear that while His followers were in the world, they were not to be part of the world system and its principles (Jn 14:17; 15:15-19; 1 Jn 2:16). Our interests should be in heavenly things since we have now obtained to an **elevated status** (Eph 2:6) and a **heavenly object** (Col 3:2).

Some of the following are facts we must consider in regards to political involvement in the world system:

Note: The following points are Copied from "Why I believe that Christians should not be involved in politics" by K Cooper, Bromborough

- The political world is openly antagonistic to Christian principles and is riddled with humanist thinking.
- There are no Scriptures to indicate that the Christian should attempt to influence things for good through political processes and activities.
- There is danger when Christians aspire to positions of power in the world because they expose themselves to the world's corruption, its thinking, and its sin (see 2 Tim 2.4).
- The New Testament does not advocate engagement in politics, social movements or schemes for reform, even though the conditions at the time were generally appalling. The early church concerned itself with the inward change which only the gospel could produce, and with regulating the lives of those who became Christians.
- Slavery was a scourge in New Testament times but none of the believers were instructed to campaign against it or try to remove it. This does not of course mean that Christians should promote its continuation.
- Certain Scriptures give us a powerful reason not to engage in politics. Philippians 3.20 states, "For our citizenship (politics, enfranchisement, voting rights, etc) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ".
- The Scripture tells us we are ambassadors in this world. A well-behaved ambassador does not interfere in the politics of the country in which he is only a temporary resident. As "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5.20; cp. Eph 6.20) it is not right for us to devote to earthly politics that time and effort which could be spent in the service of the Lord.
- The main tenet of modern political systems is the democratic principle. The essence of democracy is rejection of any notion of absolute truth or higher

authority and rejection of absolute moral values through acceptance of the rightness of whatever the majority think. This is anti-scriptural.

- Paul claimed the legal protection of his Roman citizenship but never participated politically nor taught Christians to do so (Acts 22.25-29).
- We do not know God's purposes and timetable for the nation; therefore we could not know how to vote according to His purposes.
- The Lord's words in John 18.36 imply the need for a separation from political actions and processes. The Lord abstained from political activity. When He was here He was aware of society's injustices (Lk 13.1-3) and of the "undesirables" in authority (Mt 22.16-21). The Lord's teaching does impact on social problems, like slavery, but that was not His primary message. The example which the Lord set His disciples was one of meekness, humility and obedience to the powers that be.
- Christians are not directed to improve the world but to proclaim the gospel that condemns it and offers salvation from it. Financial contributions to political parties, participation in election campaigns, running for political office and voting are all activities which constitute an unequal yoke with unbelievers.
- Non participation in the political process should be seen as a positive stance. To act differently from the world is a testimony against the world.
- While an act may not be overtly sinful this does not mean it is endorsed by Scripture. Engagement in the political process in any form is contrary to the spirit of Scripture. It is inconsistent with the Christian's position and spiritual priorities. Christians can make positive statements about their faith as much by what they abstain from and how they live. Abstention is a positive step, not an abdication of responsibility. The specific teaching that Christians should not voluntarily vote is based on sound Biblical principles. It is a statement that we are separate from a world system which is opposed to God. **Our chief influence in the world is to be through prayer, not the ballot box.**

World Governments are Beast Systems

World governments and political establishments are under the temporal power and authority of the "god of this world". They are blind to God's precepts and refuse to answer to His authority:

*In whom the **god of this world** hath **blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2Co 4:4).*

In the book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel sees a vision in which four beasts rise out of the sea (Daniel 7:1-26). Later, we discover that these “beasts” correspond to world governments or empires. After them, Daniel sees a MAN, described as the “Ancient of Days”, setting up an everlasting government that eclipses all the ones prior. How interesting that the final government is symbolized by a man—Jesus Christ—while all the preceding ones are depicted as “beasts”!

Daniel’s vision teaches us an important lesson. Until Christ’s Kingdom arrives to substitute the current rule, we exist in a world governed by the “beast system”. Now if all governments are typified by beasts, headed up by the “god of this world” (Satan), why would we cast our vote for any of them? Why would we serve them militarily in order to advance their “beastly” agendas? Why would we want to fill the role of political leader or enforce government justice when we understand these positions to be tainted by Satan’s control? The answer is clear, we don’t! As Christians, we have our own priorities to mind, and we should let the world mind theirs.

Called to Represent God’s Mercy (NT), Not His justice (OT)

In all of His time on earth, Jesus never taught about the rule of justice, but rather lectured His disciples on how to be merciful and forgiving. The manner in which He pardoned the woman caught in the “very act” of adultery best exemplifies this truth (Jon 8:4). Conversely, officers of the law are employed by government to guard and protect civilians and represent the justice of the law. They punish evildoers and lawbreakers and maintain order in society. Romans 13 describes their ministry as one of justice and retribution. We will use this chapter to contrast between their ministry and that of the Saints. What we may discover is that while God uses the government to **minister justice**, He calls upon the Saints to **minister pardon, forgiveness, and mercy**, so that all sinners may be reconciled unto Him:

Government

*Let every soul be subject unto the **higher powers**. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God....For rulers are not **a terror** to good works, but **to the evil...**for **he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil**.... (Rom 13:1-4).*

Saints

For he shall have judgment **without mercy**, that hath shewed **no mercy**; and **mercy rejoiceth against judgment** (Jas 2:13).

Blessed are the **merciful**: for they shall obtain **mercy** (Mat 5:7).

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, **I will have mercy**, and not sacrifice for I am not come to call the righteous, **but sinners** to repentance (Mat 9:13).

Even so have these also now not believed, that through **your mercy** they also **may obtain mercy** (Rom 11:31).

... **having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing**; knowing that **ye are thereunto called**, that ye should inherit a blessing (1 Pe 3:8-9).

Now imagine what would have happened if Jesus came to enforce the Mosaic Law. Imagine if He had allied himself with the Sanhedrin and sat with them to judge the lawbreakers and sinners of His day. Friends, let's not be fooled, most of society is engaged in sin and willfully lawless. Jesus would have had a full time occupation hauling people to jail! And if so, what would this have accomplished?? Just how many people would have wanted to rub shoulders with Him? How many people would flock to hear His messages knowing that He might "nab" them and bring them to justice? Would the tax collectors and sinners want to hang out with *this* "jesus"? Would Zaccheus have climbed the tree in anticipation of hearing the "great Teacher" knowing he might get into trouble for all of his thievery and extortion? As silly as this may sound, the majority of Believers today are persuaded they can serve government in the capacity of "justice keepers" and also pursue a full time ministry toward sinners. But I believe this type of political involvement is wrong and goes entirely contrary to the ministry of Christ, as one who came to save the sinners, **not prosecute them to the full letter of the law.**

The same could be said of those who believe in fighting for their country in order to forward a secular government's agenda. Why did Paul say that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood" (Eph 6:12)? Was he just making an arbitrary statement? Or maybe he was suggesting that it's **useless** to try to use physical force to overcome wickedness and

evil? I believe Christians can do a lot more on their knees through prayer, than by shooting others. I also believe that Ephesians 6 directly invalidates “just war” theology. As mentioned before, government can only deal with the physical character of sin. It tackles the visible ailments of a fallen human race. Jesus came to deal with the spiritual nature of sin, that which is invisible and hides itself well from the naked eye. His sole ministry was to expose the root cause of sin, thereby eliminating it. The establishment of the Church as a spiritual Kingdom was so that it could function on the basis of these very principles **and act to counterbalance the government system**. **The people of God are called to provide the antidote for society’s ills in a different fashion than by political means.** Now some of you may ask, “how can we get involved to make a positive difference in society, if not politically?” The answer is simple. While the Scriptures do not prescribe political change, we can do the following to greatly impact the social climate around us. Here’s how:

- Prayer

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, **supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty** (1Ti 2:1-2).*

- Evangelism

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Mat 28:19).

- Paying Tribute & Obedience

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers....Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. **Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour* (Rom 13:1-7).*

In Christ,

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