

“Christians and their governments.”

Romans 13:1-7 NASB

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.

“Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

“⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*.”

Recall facing a difficult decision and five different people wanted to give you free advice?

If that was enough, each of the five had a different opinion from the others.

No two offered the same counsel.
That’s what it’s like for Christians trying to relate to their governments.

Everyone has strong opinions.



Concerning their governments, where should Christians go for guidance?

What they hear from their favorite news commentator or politician satisfies many people.

Some folks follow great preachers; others, their parents’ belief; many, what a denomination teaches.

Yet shouldn’t Christians do what Jesus taught?

Once I began serious Bible reading, I realized that not all authority figures follow God’s word.

Church leaders don’t always abide by Scripture.

Christ clearly warned about not following him.

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said: “It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach man-made rules as though they were my laws.”¹

Jesus’ words should guide true believers.

¹ Matthew 15:9 NASB

Luke 6: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷ As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”

**In life decisions and church matters,
God’s word overrules all other authority.**

Sunday school children know what happens when we build on the sand of human advice.

Jesus’ forcefully warned:

⁴⁹ “The one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”²

We might not see the big wrecking ball yet, but if we follow human advice and not the Lord’s, sooner or later expect His demolition squad.

**1) In respect to our personal lives and
the church, we follow Jesus’ teaching.
Otherwise he doesn’t claim us.**



² Luke 6:46-49 NASB

2) Many religious teachers err respecting our relationships with government.

They try to apply Law of Moses principles instead of what Jesus taught.

In doing that, they miss important facts.

The Lord gave the nation of Israel a unique set of laws known as the Ten Commandments.

Most Christians know that, but they seem not to know another vital truth:

What fact is that?

At first, Israel differed from other nations because they didn’t have a human king.

God was their king and his laws for Israel were the Ten Commandments (Law of Moses).

Mosaic Law regulated all life: sanitation and health; real estate, taxation, and property; marriage, family, religion; all tied together.

God meant the Ten Commandments and their sub-statutes as all-encompassing laws for Israel.

Priests and local judges administered the laws, but Israel had no human king or queen.

Why didn’t they have a king?

Because God was their king and supreme ruler.

The priests, the leaders, and all the people were to respect and obey God, the King’s laws.

Many of the Psalms, e.g. 2, 24, 44:4, 45:6; 47:7, declared and reaffirmed God as King.

But people didn't like the idea of having a king they couldn't see.

They wanted a visible king.

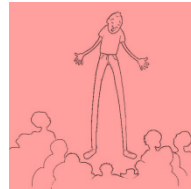
1 Samuel 8:7 tells us how Israel wanted a ruler like all the other nations around them.

God gave them a king to parade and present a distinguished image.

Self-proclaimed “experts” like to speak of candidates they think “look Presidential.”

The Lord gave Israel a guy who looked “kingly.” He picked, Saul, the tallest dude in the land.

Yet the first time tall Saul saw Goliath, the giant Philistine, the human king wilted.



Something else happened; even big kings struggle with envy; Saul lost his battle with that, too.

The second king, David, was better, but lust captivated him and his kids gave him trouble.

Though noted for his wisdom, the third king, Solomon, succumbed to power, lust, and greed.

Solomon's son taxed the people so heavily, the nation permanently divided.

Worst of all, the people never really made God their king.

People such as we didn't put God in control of their daily habits and behavior.

They thought God's laws a drag and a burden. They wanted to imitate their glamorous neighbors.

As far as I know, God originally designed human beings to grow old after a time.

That age exceeded by far our life-expectancy.

What happened that we don't live longer?

Recall those weaknesses that ensnared the kings?

I refer to envy-jealousy, lust, greed, worry, fear.

They cause lots of grief and shorten our life-span.

Though envy, lust, greed, worry, and fear bring hate, misery and death, we still get involved in them.

Reviewing briefly:

Our Creator-King set aside a small nation and gave them a perfect set of laws and great future.

The people didn't care much for God's laws; they also wanted and got visible kings.

Those visible kings Israel wanted led them to hardship, and misery, and they lost their nation.

Yet God did something he planned from the start.

His son (Jesus) became flesh and lived among us, i.e., God became visible a while (see John 1:1-14).

In human flesh, Jesus showed us how to live.

Jesus personally overcame greed, power ambitions, lust, fear, worry, and every human foible.

In human flesh, Jesus showed us how to respect governments and do God's will.

He knew the necessity of law and order and the need to obey authorities.

Jesus had power to resist, but he submitted to authorities.

Jesus' perfect behavior made those in charge hatefully envious; they falsely charged him, brutally beat him, and killed him.



The Bible emphasizes these basic elements:

- God sent Christ His Son here to live.
- We crucified him.
- God raised him on the third day.
- No one but Jesus can save and help us.
- Jesus is now at "God's right hand."
- He's coming back to judge us all and to gather those who have lived by faith in him.

The Apostles preached these basic points.

We save ourselves by repenting, making Christ our king, being baptized in his name, living to honor God in Christ, and loving others.

Preaching Jesus and his resurrection are crucial.

Since the beginning, people haven't changed.

Popular religion was useless thousands of years ago.

It was empty, didn't help people with their problems, and actually made things worse.

When we soberly turn off our iPad and listen to that voice in the night, the same questions haunt.

- **What is the meaning of life?**
- **How do I find a sense of purpose?**
- **How can I feel useful, loved, and accepted?**
- **What happens when I die?**

God in Christ visited this planet, lived unselfishly, died on our behalf, and rose from the dead; he answered all our questions,

- 3) **Trying to change society instead of leading people to Jesus, muddles his great message.**
Luke 12:13-15, tells of a man wanting Jesus' help.
The issue this man raised divides and paralyzes most of the world's societies.
Fierce political debates center on his request.

The question devours church people on the left and the right; its tentacles reach everywhere.

"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

This guy complained to Jesus, "My brother has more than I do. He should share."

The question, “**What’s fair?**” divides families, splits churches, and rips societies apart.

What is fair?

The press, talking heads, politicians, church leaders, along with various and sundry “experts” have their ideas of what’s fair.

If politicians want to argue those issues, so be it.

Jesus said, however: “**Don’t get me involved.**”

If Jesus wouldn’t get into the fray, what makes us think we can resolve the fairness issue?

Should we be concerned about the poor?

Certainly.

Jesus warned us that we’ll have some Judgment Day surprises because we don’t feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those in prison.

Jesus’ examples clearly say that he wants us to personally do this.

If we have two coats, we give to a person who doesn’t have one.

We share extra food and with the hungry.

Jesus never ordered us to vote so politicians could take what our neighbors have.

He wants us to share, not force others to give.

1 Timothy 6:17, 18 says:

Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them



to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage-to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous (The Message).

The Apostle teaches that we should urge wealthy Christians to share; I’m confident he’s not talking about going after non-Christians.

1 Corinthians 5, a Scripture many Christians seem to overlook, proves my point:

Some know about this text because it refers to the guy who was living with his father’s wife.

Instead of being scandalized by his actions, the Corinthians bragged about how understanding and enlightened they were.

The Corinthians allowed this immoral guy to have fellowship with them, so Paul reminded them about what he previously wrote:

“Don’t associate with sexually immoral people.”

Notice the distinction Paul made in telling the Corinthians: *When I told you not to associate with immoral people, I didn’t mean people outside the church who are immoral.*

Non-church people aren’t our responsibility:

Don’t pass judgment on the adulterers, greedy, swindlers, idolaters, and drunkards of the world. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?

Many think they should judge and change the attitudes of all people.

Jesus never gave us that assignment.

Does that mean that we say nothing to anyone?

Not exactly.

Jesus wants us tell his Good News and warn people to change and submit to God as he did.

If folks don't listen, we shake the dust off our feet and go to people who will listen.

Jesus didn't task us with changing society; only to tell his Good News everywhere.

Christians often complain because society isn't perfect.

- **Culture wasn't ideal when Jesus preached.**
- **It wasn't perfect when Peter and Paul lived.**
- **The world certainly isn't now.**

How does Jesus want us to deal with life's inequities?

Preach the Good News of his kingdom.

Feed the poor by taking from our own pocketbooks.

- **We don't try to alter society.**
- **We don't picket, protest, or strike.**
- **We don't try to empower anyone.**

Jesus served while he was here; he wants us to serve.

While serving, we constantly exalt and praise

God for what He has done in Christ.

If we are not attempting to connect people with the truth of God's rescue mission in Christ, and glorifying Him, we're muddling His message.

The church makes God's wisdom known by honoring and glorifying Christ.

Judging is far above any human's pay grade.

God will Judge unbelievers.

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"God was bringing the world back to himself through Christ.

He did not hold people's sins against them.

God has trusted us with the message . . ."

2 Corinthians 5: 19, 20 NIRV