

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VOTE?

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Many Christians wonder whether a Christian should vote in elections. Some go so far as to not stand for the national anthem, or salute the national flag, or swear on the Bible in a law court. Many are 'conscientious objectors' refusing to be enlisted for national service. All such participation in the affairs of government to such believers is considered a "worldly" and wasted exercise because, our Hope is in the everlasting Kingdom of Christ. After all, Jesus said to the Roman procurator, Pilate;

"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, my kingdom is not derived from this realm" (John 19: 36).

Other Christians are convinced they should engage in such civic activities as they are bringing "salt" into a deteriorating and decaying world. Their mindset is that all that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. We are called to let our light shine and you can't do that hiding within non-participation.

So, who's right? Those Christians who vote in all good conscience thinking this is their duty under God to honour those in political authority (**honour the king and those in authority ---1 Pet. 2: 17; Rom. 13: 1**), or those who have no interest in politics whatsoever because they look for that Kingdom that is not of this world?

Is God on anybody's side? Would He want Christians to vote conservative, (Republican in America, Tory in UK, Liberal/National in Australia, etc.) or those who vote leaning to the Left (Democrat in America, Labour in UK, Australia, NZ, etc.) or is He for those who abstain altogether believing Jesus was not party to any politico-religious establishment? ¹

HISTORICAL RECORD

In so far as our Western democracies go, it's a matter of historical record that the right to vote for representatives of the people was hard-won by many conscientious Christians. As they read the Bible, they had a strong sense that every single individual has "rights" under God. The State should recognise all persons --- regardless of social status, race, colour, or creed --- as having inalienable rights because they are "in the image of God". ²

Now, it's not the purpose of my answer to stomp on anybody's sincerely held convictions on this question. But I will give you my own view, which I trust comes after much serious reflection and prayerful study of Scripture. I am aware that some will dismiss whatever I say because I am a middle-aged, white male speaking from a privileged place in the world.

That said, I am not ashamed to say that I am a moral conservative when it comes to questions of the meaning of marriage and family, gender identity, homosexuality, abortion, etc. On the other hand, I am all for social justice for the oppressed, the poor, the disadvantaged, the refugee, the weak and voiceless, etc.

¹ It's a bit more complicated for some of us who live in countries where voting is "compulsory". Non-voting is therefore by law considered a form of civil disobedience.

² No, it was **not** the Greeks who first thought of our Western democracy. Their idea was that there exists a natural hierarchy with some men and classes born to rule and command others who were born to obey!

MY IDENTITY

BUT --- my personal sense of identity does not come from any political party or platform, nor even from my nationality, (though I am a patriotic Australian when it comes to the values of my country that are based on fairness, justice, equality for all, etc I'll even barrack for my national cricket team, or my footy team!).

So, my sense of identity comes from being a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. (And look what the "establishment" did to him!) My identity comes from a relationship with the Son of God and is fuelled by His living Spirit from the Bible being breathed into my soul! The call of Jesus to "Follow me" is irresistible, revolutionary, transforming, eternally captivating.

This means that like the holy prophets of Israel, like the holy apostles and disciples of Jesus, I long to see God's values triumph in this fractured and lost world. I long to see God's Kingdom values in Australia and every nation of the world. So, I am not one wanting to uphold the political *status quo!*

If the Gospel of Jesus' Kingdom-message means anything, it means we will be committed to social transformation. Our prayer will always be, **Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**". Our words and our walk model the eternal values of that coming new order!

Therefore, as a follower of Jesus I will do my little bit to combat human trafficking and the sex-slave industry, I will fight for the unborn, I will help the refugee and the homeless, I will extend my hand to the sexually confused and abused, I will speak against the pornographic industry, I will feed the hungry, etc.

I want to be Christ and the Church, not just go to Church and talk Bible. So, you could say I am a revolutionary at heart. To be a Christian in this world is to be on the cutting edge of hurting and needing humanity. It's to be concerned for the environment, because this is God's world and we are His stewards. It's to care for animals. It's to tend the soil and plants. It's to fight for the right to life for the unborn.

Thus, my hope is not in any political party, or prime minister, or president. It's not "Australia above all" or "America First" but Christ's "Great Commission first". It's only the Gospel of Christ's coming Kingdom that can capture the imagination and the vision and the heart.

My heart's desire is to see lives and nations transformed by the love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate revolutionary. Jesus is the ultimate transformer. And he is the Lord of the world and he is coming again, so we better get connected to his agenda!

And it's time to start in my own life, my own marriage, my own home, my own neighbourhood and street. It's time to let his light shine.

DON'T YOU KNOW?

Scripture teaches that we believers are going to **judge** both **the world** and **angels** (1 Cor. 6: 2-3). It means we are going to "manage" and preside over the coming new world order of God's Kingdom. In the context the apostle was writing to believers who seemed incapable of adjudicating small disputes amongst themselves. Wake up people! You are in training for exalted positions in that coming world government! That was Paul's message.

So why not now be the best tradesman I can, or the best teacher, or gardener, or farmer, or administrator, or trader, or mother, or creative artist and musician, or builder, etc. etc.? God is looking for qualified folk to run His new administration under Christ. So why wouldn't He be interested in those Christians who want to enter politics to make a difference in His world here and now? Wasn't **Daniel** a politician? Wouldn't you vote for him?

So, if I can add my vote and voice to a candidate who might just want the same things --- even though he or she is an imperfect individual and may break their election promises --- why, that seems to be a privilege. But you are perfectly free to vote another way!

Speaking personally, when I go to cast my vote in the secret ballot I recall those Christians who fought for this privilege. They saw it as a matter of social justice for all. And I see no conflict of interest as I wait for the glorious appearing of my Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus guaranteed my entrance into that new world by his own blood, and my right to vote has been won by the blood, sweat and tears of many outstanding Christian believers.

In my considered opinion then, the question of whether a Christian should vote by casting his or her ballot comes down to a matter of personal conscience that each must determine by prayerful study.