

# The Whole Counsel of God

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[www.thegoodnewsofgod.org](http://www.thegoodnewsofgod.org)

“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.  
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.”

Acts 20:26-27 NKJV

## From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 JULY 2025

With great joy, we present the sixth edition in our second volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We have now completed the second volume of the *The Whole Counsel of God*. Regarding the purpose of this publication, we stated the following in our first edition, published Sept. 2023:

“We strive to teach the truth on all manner of Bible subjects, especially often overlooked subjects and those topics many have deemed ‘divisive’ and ‘controversial,’ even among members of the Lord’s church. By focusing on these subjects, we do not aim to be quarrelsome; rather, we place special emphasis on these topics because we fear ever being grouped in with those whom Paul described in **2 Tim. 4:3-4**. We seek to not only speak the truth as we examine each Bible subject, but we also strive to always do so in love (**Eph. 4:15**).”

In pursuit of the above goal, we have published articles on various subjects, such as:

Title	Edition	Author
“Does 1 Cor. 14:34-35 Apply to the Modern Assembly?”	(Vol. 1, No. 1)	Pat Donahue
“Interracial Marriage”	(Vol. 1, No. 1)	Dylan Stewart
“Sex: A Biblical Discussion”	(Vol. 1, No. 2)	Dylan Stewart
“An Unforgivable Sin”	(Vol. 1, No. 2)	Mike Johnson
“Refuting Mental Divorce”	(Vol. 1, No. 3)	Dylan Stewart
“The High Cost of Generic Preaching”	(Vol. 1, No. 4)	Dickey Howard
“The Other Five Elements of the Lord’s Supper”	(Vol. 1, No. 4)	Dylan Stewart
“Understanding Angels – Myths”	(Vol. 1, No. 5)	Mike Johnson
“Sodom Was Not Destroyed for Homosexuality?”	(Vol. 1, No. 5)	Dylan Stewart
“Feet Washing”	(Vol. 1, No. 5)	Carrol Sutton
“Sins of Ignorance – ‘Where is the Grace?’”	(Vol. 1, No. 6)	Dylan Stewart
“Law Enforcement: God’s Design and My Duty”	(Vol. 1, No. 6)	Steve Klein
“Is the Faithful Saint Continually Cleansed?”	(Vol. 2, No. 1)	Hiram Hutto
“Can Women Audibly Confess During Church?”	(Vol. 2, No. 2)	Dylan Stewart
“Greetings!” (An Article Discussing the “Holy Kiss”)	(Vol. 2, No. 3)	Andy Diestelkamp
“Must Women Wear Skirts and Dresses?”	(Vol. 2, No. 3)	Dylan Stewart
“Gender Equality in Divorce and Remarriage”	(Vol. 2, No. 4)	Bryan Dockens
“Only Administer the Lord’s Supper at Night?”	(Vol. 2, No. 5)	Dylan Stewart

By publishing these articles (as well as numerous other articles not mentioned here), we pray that we have lived up to our mission statement outlined in the very first edition of this publication.

In this edition of the journal, we have included articles discussing social drinking, taxation by civil governments, and whether or not Christians are scripturally authorized to engage in carnal warfare. We ask that you please give careful consideration to the information presented. We pray these articles will be of great spiritual benefit to all who read them. (DTS)

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*The Whole Counsel of God* is published bi-monthly. All correspondences should be submitted via the **Contact Form** found [here](#).

For previous editions of *The Whole Counsel of God*, visit [www.thegoodnewsofgod.org](http://www.thegoodnewsofgod.org).

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# Social Drinking

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of social drinking seems to be a controversial one among younger Christians and especially Christians of a “liberal” persuasion. However, this issue is also a pervasive one that appears to be creeping into what we might consider our more “conservative” churches. As such, let us consider what the New Testament teaches on the matter to determine whether or not God authorizes the practice of social drinking.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL DRINKING?

When I was younger, I did not understand what preachers meant when they used the phrase “social drinking.” To alleviate any potential confusion, allow me to explain exactly what we mean when we use the term “social drinking.” We mean (1) drinking alcohol socially, such as drinking “responsibly” at parties and other social gatherings; (2) infrequently drinking alcohol, such as drinking only on special occasions (New Year’s Eve, birthdays, Thanksgiving, etc.), a glass of wine at dinner, a beer while mowing the grass, etc.; (3) drinking alcohol in “moderation,” i.e. drinking without reaching the state

of drunkenness. Now, the important question is what does the Bible teach on this subject?

## EPHESIANS 5:15-18

**Eph. 5:15-18** reads, “*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.*” Paul warns here of the need to walk carefully and with wisdom. In contrast, a foolish and unwise walk is evidenced by being “*drunk with wine,*” wherein is “*excess*” [KJV] and “*debauchery*” [NASB, ESV], leading to “*reckless living*” [CSB] (**Eph. 5:18**). The Greek verb form that Paul uses for “*drunk*” in **Eph. 5:18** indicates the process of getting drunk, not just the final state of drunkenness. The word means: “To intoxicate, make drunk; passive . . . to get drunk, become intoxicated” (Thayer); “To make drunk, an inceptive verb that begins the process of the state expressed in methuo [3184], to drink to intoxication” (Vine). So, more literally, Paul warns not to begin the process of being softened by alcohol. How does one start this process? By drinking, of course. Therefore, the consumption of intoxicating beverages which alter our mental state is condemned by this passage, not just the final state of drunkenness. Wise children of God walking in the light must abstain from initiating the process of dulling our senses via intoxicating alcohol; that is the only way we can remain alert, “*awake*” (**Eph. 5:8-14**), and be “*filled with the spirit*” (**Eph. 5:18**).

### 1 PETER 4:3

**1 Pet. 4:3** says, *“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.”* Peter says drinking intoxicating beverages is *“doing the will of the Gentiles,”* and Paul shows in **Eph. 4:17** that Christians *“should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.”* What better example do we need which displays *“futility of mind”* than that which dulls and negatively affects our senses like intoxicating beverages?

Furthermore, **1 Pet. 4:13** condemns three categories of drinking, including *“drunkenness, revelries,”* and *“drinking parties.”* Notice the third category condemns *“drinking parties,”* not drunken parties. The term *“drinking parties”* refers to a social gathering at which wine is served (BDAG, 857). So, just like with **Eph. 5:18**, it is not just drunkenness that is condemned in this passage but also drinking itself. In fact, **1 Pet. 4:13** teaches that we should not knowingly attend social gatherings where alcohol is served.

### 1 THESSALONIANS 5:5-8

**1 Thess. 5:5-8** teaches, *“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation”* The word *“sober”* in this text means: *“To be free from the influence of intoxicants”* (Vine); *“To be sober, to abstain from wine”* (Strong). This passage stresses the importance of being prepared for the coming judgment that will

occur at any moment, where all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We must remain *“sober”* while awaiting that day. To use the language of Mr. Vine and Mr. Strong, we must abstain from alcohol and keep our senses free from the influence of these intoxicants while making preparations for the judgment day. Therefore, just like with **Eph. 5:15-18** and **1 Pet. 4:3**, it is not just drunkenness that is condemned in this text but also drinking itself.



### BUT JESUS TURNED WATER INTO WINE?

We all agree that Jesus turned *“water”* into *“wine”* during a wedding feast (party) in **John 2:1-11**, but did He turn the water into fermented or unfermented wine?

Some argue that the word *“drunk”* in **John 2:10** indicates the alcohol was fermented. However, the word *“drunk”* does not always apply to drunkenness. It can also refer to the state of being filled or satiated (**1 Cor. 11:21**). Additionally, *“wine”* can refer to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine. There are numerous examples throughout the Bible of the word *“wine”* being used in reference to unfermented wine, i.e. grape juice (**Isa. 16:10, 65:8; Deut. 11:14; etc.**). But there are numerous other examples throughout the Bible where the word *“wine”* is used in reference to fermented wine, i.e. an alcoholic beverage (**Num. 6:3; Isa. 5:11, 22; etc.**). So, what kind of wine did Jesus produce?

We know Jesus lived a sinless life, never transgressing the Law of Moses (**1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15**). However, these verses emphasizing the perfection of Christ are false if Jesus provided fermented wine to the guests of the wedding feast in **John 2** because Jesus lived under the Law of Moses and that law condemned dispersing alcohol to others (**Hab. 2:15-16**). Therefore, the only possible conclusion that can be drawn is that the wine in **John 2:1-11** was unfermented. Jesus did not sin, nor did He ever tempt others to sin (**James 1:13**) by providing fermented wine at a party when the Law of Moses directly forbade Him from doing so.

#### WHAT ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 5:23?

Paul told Timothy, *“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities”* (**1 Tim. 5:23**). Good Bible students will notice that Paul did not tell his young protege to enjoy a glass of wine at dinner or at social gatherings but, rather, to drink a little wine for his *“infirmities.”* In other words, Paul suggested Timothy drink wine medicinally. Neither does this text approve drinking alcohol recreationally, nor does it approve drinking wine in excess even for medicinal purposes – only a *“little”* wine is authorized as a form of medicine. If the *“wine”* mentioned in **1 Tim. 5:23** is referring to an alcoholic drink, and if we follow Paul’s advice today by using wine in small doses medicinally, we must carefully examine ourselves and our motives for doing so (**2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 12:9**) and stay on guard against the temptation to begin using wine non-medicinally (**Eph. 4:27**).

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

If the evidence thus far does not convince you that social drinking is unauthorized by the New Testament, please consider

the following points that also impact this discussion in principle.

It is a sin to allow ourselves to become addicted to anything (**1 Cor. 6:12; 2 Pet. 2:19; Rom. 6:15-17; Matt. 6:24**). Why would we put ourselves in a place of temptation to become addicted to alcohol, which we all realize is incredibly addictive?

The Spirit repeatedly commands us throughout the New Testament to be sober-minded (**1 Pet. 1:13, 4:7, 5:8, etc.**). These commands do not contextually nor specifically refer to abstinence from alcohol, but, by necessity, they generically require such since alcohol causes us to lack a sober mind.

We are commanded to avoid anything that may appear sinful to others (**1 Thess. 5:22; 2 Cor. 8:20-21**). Though society generally accepts social drinking, drinking alcohol still carries a negative social stigma among many and can bear a negative impact on our influence. Therefore, wisdom teaches us to abstain from it since we are commanded to carefully craft a positive influence to draw others to Christ (**Matt. 5:16**) and avoid any potential *“bad faith”* accusations from those looking to point the finger at us for no reason other than to hurt our influence (**1 Pet. 2:12**).

#### CONCLUSION

Rather than drinking alcoholic spirits, wise people walking in the light must fill themselves with the Spirit (**Eph. 5:18**). Christians are filled with the Spirit of God when they are filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (**Col. 1:9**) by allowing the word of God to dwell in them (**Col. 3:16**). Just as the drunkard liberally fills himself with intoxicating spirits, Christians must liberally fill themselves with the Holy Spirit by heeding the words He has spoken.

## “For Because of This You Also Pay Taxes”

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Though some argue to the contrary, taxation is not some scheme developed by man. Although corrupt governments abuse it, taxation is a divine ordinance derived from God for a purpose.

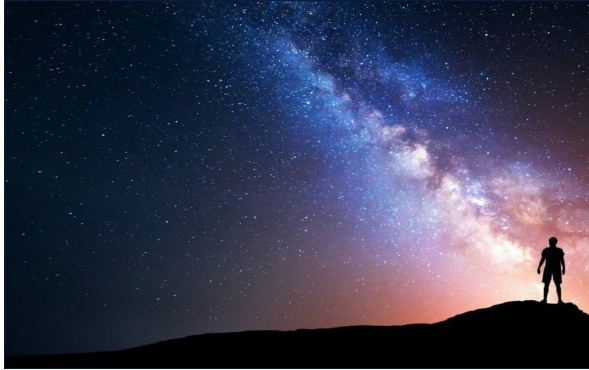
Paul, describing the role of civil government said, “*For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing*” (**Rom. 13:4-6**). This passage shows that taxes are primarily intended as a means for employing God’s justice (punishing evil and rewarding good) on earth. Those in power who abuse tax systems and take advantage of people living in subjection to them will answer to God for how they have handled their responsibility laid out in these verses, and we who are in subjection will have to answer to God for how we handled our responsibilities as earthly citizens living in submission to the authorities who rule over us (**2 Pet. 2:9-10**).

Some argue that we have no obligation to pay taxes to the fullest extent if the government uses this tax money for immoral purposes. Of course, such a conclusion conveniently overlooks the fact that the Roman government was immoral and used its tax money to support sinful practices such as idolatry and emperor worship, yet Paul still commanded Roman Christians who lived under this corrupt government to pay their taxes: “*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor*” (**Rom. 13:7**). Although corrupt governmental leaders may not use taxes for the purpose God intended, we are still obligated to pay our taxes, regardless of the corruption and regardless of how much we may think our taxes are not being put to proper use.

The only time a person is permitted to violate civil law is when obedience to civil government causes us to violate divine law (**Acts 5:29**). Just because the government sins against us or makes our lives more difficult by increasing our taxes, that does not mean we have a right to sin against them by not paying what is owed them. **Rom. 12:7** is absolute: “*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.*” Are we really willing to sacrifice our souls by skimping on our taxes? “*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (**Mark 8:36-37**). Brethren, do not allow something “*as uncertain as riches*” (**1 Tim. 6:17, ISV**) to cost you your soul!

# Stars

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God made the stars. In the eighth Psalm, David addressed “*Jehovah, our Lord*” whose glory is above the heavens (**Psalm 8:1**), and said, “*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?*” (**v.3-4**). Viewing the cosmos is humbling because “*the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork*” (**Psalm 19:1**), yet the One who made it all gives special attention to mankind.

## STARS ARE BEYOND COUNTING

It is written, “*The host of heaven cannot be numbered*” (**Jer. 33:22**). To help Abraham comprehend the vastness of the multitudes he would father, the Almighty told him, “*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... So shall your descendants be*” (**Gen. 15:5**). Astronomers estimate the observable universe to contain at least ten sextillion stars and up to one septillion. That is only an estimate, extrapolated from available data, and that is only the portion of the universe that can be observed.

## GOD HAS NAMED EACH STAR

Despite the enormity of space, the International Astronomical Union has only ever named 495 stars, but Jehovah, “*He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name*” (**Psalm 147:4**). He reveals a certain few of these stars’ names, clustered into conspicuous constellations: “*He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades*” (**Job 9:9**). The remainder of the names He retains unto Himself.

## STARS ARE NOT ALL THE SAME

Explaining that the resurrected state will vary from the current natural state of the body, Paul wrote, “*There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory*” (**1 Cor. 15:40-41**). Astronomers have come to classify stars as Red Giants, White Dwarfs, Neutron Stars, Pulsars, Magnetars, Red Dwarfs, and Brown Dwarfs.

## STARS EMIT SOUND

Asserting His power, Jehovah asked, “*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*” (**Job 38:4-7**). That stars produce noise was not scientifically

verifiable until the advent of modern technology in 1933. The National Radio Astronomy Observatory maintains the Very Large Array of 28 antennae, or radio telescopes, in the Plains of San Agustín, 50 miles west of Socorro, New Mexico, where the unseen attributes of space are learned.

### **STARS ARE FOR SIGNS, SEASONS, AND LIGHT**

*“God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:14-18).* While the greater light rules the day, the lesser light rules the night; on a cloudless night, even when the moon is behind the earth, stars can illuminate one’s path. Celestial bodies have a role in determining time; certain stars can only be seen during certain seasons. Celestial navigation utilizes the movement of the stars to fix one’s location on earth. On one very special occasion, a star led magi from the East to meet Jesus after His birth in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:2, 9-10).

### **STARS ARE NOT FOR ASTROLOGY**

The prophet Isaiah pronounced calamity upon astrologers and their like, saying, *“Evil shall come upon you; you shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; you will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know. Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude*

*of your sorceries, in which you have labored from your youth — Perhaps you will be able to profit, perhaps you will prevail. You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you” (Isa. 47:11-13).* Astrologers and stargazers are in the same category as enchantments and sorceries, which God called abominable (Deut. 18:11-12). The star sign under which a person is born will not determine personality, nor what events will transpire in that one’s life. Rather, personality is determined by how one keeps his heart (Prov. 4:23) and sets his mind (Col. 3:2). To suggest the stars have control over events is to ascribe power to the creation, rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25), which is idolatry. May all trust in the true God who created the stars, not the stars, themselves. And may the stars be useful for the purposes God intended – nothing more.

## **SWORD SWIPES**

**“Shun profane and vain babblings”  
(2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV)**

**Neglecting to do good bears the same consequence as choosing to do evil.**

*“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, it does not have works is dead” (James 2:14-17). (DTS)*

# The Christian and Civil Government

WAYNE JACKSON

ORIGINAL TRACT ARCHIVED IN [THE OLD PATHS ARCHIVE](#)

In order to properly understand the relationship of the Christian to the civil government, it is necessary to briefly consider the function of governments in the overall scheme of divine redemption, as viewed in the context of the Bible as a whole. There are great principles which must be carefully considered by way of introduction to this important theme. It is commonly believed that there are three institutions of divine origin: the home, civil government, and the church. I do not believe that is an accurate concept. Certainly both the home and the church are of divine origin, but did civil government actually commence with divine approval?

## THE ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

The first civil government of which one reads in the Bible was founded by Nimrod: *“the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar”* (Gen. 10:10). Nimrod, whose name according to some signifies, “Let us rebel” (Jacobus, 204), was a mighty hunter before Jehovah (10:9). Of this passage Clarke notes: “The word tsayid, which we render hunter, signifies prey; and is applied in the Scriptures to the hunting of men by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. Hence, it is likely that Nimrod, having acquired power, used it in tyranny and oppression; and by rapine and violence founded that domain which was the first distinguished by the name of a kingdom on the face of the earth” (Clarke, 36). Leupold commented that “the gross violation of men’s rights, that this mighty hunter became guilty of, did not elude the watchful eye” of Jehovah (1.367).

Human civil government was thus founded in rebellion to God. Centuries later, when the Israelites requested a monarch that they might *“be like all the nations”* (1 Sam. 8:5, 20), though Jehovah gave them a king in his anger (Hos. 13:11), their desire for such a ruler clearly reflected a rejection of the Lord’s arrangement for them (1 Sam. 8:7).

If civil government was originally initiated in rebellion to God, then it is not of divine origin. In starting human governments, men surrendered the control of their affairs to Satan, hence, the devil is said to be the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In fact, Christ clearly referred to his impending arrest by the civil authorities when he said: *“...the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me”* (Jn. 14:30). Moreover, in the wilderness temptation, Satan showed Christ “all the kingdoms of the world” and promised, upon the condition that the Lord would worship him, *“To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered* (Greek *paradedotai*, perfect tense - past action with abiding results) *unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it”* (Lk. 4:6). It need hardly be pointed out that if Jesus had known that Satan merely was lying, there would have been no temptation in the diabolic suggestion! I am fully aware that elsewhere the Bible says that *“the higher powers are ordained of God,”* and that will be considered presently.

## GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN THE WORLD

“The term ‘sovereignty’ connotes a situation in which a person, from his innate dignity, exercises supreme power, with no ar-

eas of his province outside his jurisdiction” (Zondervan, 498). God is the sovereign of the universe. He is in control of all things ultimately! Now it is a fact that Jehovah desires that all men serve him by voluntary submission, but when they do not, he can, and does, take charge of earthly affairs to bring about his own redemptive purpose. The Bible is literally filled with examples of this truth. Observe the following.

God exercises providential control over the nations of the world. Daniel informs us that ultimately it is “*the Most High*” that “*ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men*” (**Dan. 4:17**). The Almighty removes kings and sets up kings (**Dan. 2:21**). Indeed, “*he is ruler over the nations*” (**Psa. 22:28**). Of world powers Paul says that God determines their appointed seasons (i.e., the duration of their administrations) and the bounds of their habitations (the extent of their conquests) (**Acts 17:26**). Christ plainly said that Pilate could have exercised no authority against him except by divine permission (**Jn. 19:11**).

God can, consistent with his own holiness, use evil men to providentially bring about ultimate good in his world. Here is a tremendous Bible principle that needs to be recognized: the Lord can take wicked men, who are in absolute rebellion to him, and use them as instruments of vengeance to punish other evil people, or to maintain order in society.

Note:

(A) When Israel became deeply involved in idolatry, Jehovah raised up the Assyrians to be “*the rod of mine anger*” (**Isa. 10:5**). He sent the haughty Assyrians against profane Israel, and yet, amazingly, the Assyrians had no idea that they were accomplishing

Heaven’s will [*“Howbeit he meaneth not so”* **Isa. 10:7**].

(B) When Assyria needed to be punished (**Isa. 10:12, 24-25**), God exalted the Chaldeans [Babylonians] to overthrow them, and to subdue the kingdom of Judah (**Hab. 1:5ff**). The evil Nebuchadnezzar, whom the Lord called “*my servant*” (**Jer. 25:9**), was employed as an instrument to this end.

(C) Then, the Babylonians, by the decree of God, were conquered by the Medes and Persians, whom the Lord denominated his “*consecrated ones*” (**Isa. 13:3**). In that endeavor God used a pagan king, Cyrus, as his “*shepherd*,” his “*anointed*” (**Isa. 44:28; 45:1**).

(D) Under Jehovah’s direction, the Medes and Persians were subdued by the Greeks, led by the “*rough he-goat*,” Alexander the Great (**Dan. 8:5, 21; cf. 2:39**).

(E) The Greeks were eventually destroyed by the Roman armies [God’s armies (**Mt. 22:7**)] to punish Jerusalem and the Jews.

## THE FUNCTIONS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

**Rom. 13:1-7** sets forth the function of civil government. Let us studiously consider this context.

First, the “*higher powers*” are identified as the “*rulers*” of civil government (**v.1, 3**).

Second, they are said to be “*ordained of God*” (**v.1**). Exactly what does that expression mean? The word “*ordained*” translates the Greek term tetagmenai [a perfect, passive participle form of tasso]. The word simply means, as Arndt & Gingrich observe: to “appoint to or establish in an office (the authorities) who are now in power are instituted by God - Rom. 13:1” (813). The word itself says nothing whatever about the character or the

spiritual nature of the subject involved. The word is not some sort of “sanctified” term which would necessarily suggest that a child of God could function, with the Lord’s approval, in that capacity. A form of the word, for instance, is used in **Acts 18:2** of Claudius’ edict (diatasso) which banished all Jews from Rome.

Third, those who resist the rulers withstand the ordinance (i.e., that which has been appointed) of God and shall thus receive judgment.

Fourth, rulers are appointed to be a terror (i.e., to produce fear) to those who would do evil in society.

Fifth, the civil authority serves as a “minister of God” for good on behalf of the Christian. “Minister” translates the Greek diakonos, meaning “servant,” but, again, with no necessary indication of character suggested. Remember, the evil Nebuchadnezzar was God’s “servant” (**Jer. 25:9**) to chastise Judah; then the Lord punished the king! Moreover, at the time this Roman epistle was penned, Caesar Nero, that wicked, homosexual tyrant, was one of those rulers who is here called a “minister of God.” The point is this: just because a function is in some sense a ministry or service to God, does not necessarily mean that a Christian may serve in that capacity with divine approval! Also, observe that in **Rom. 13:4** the roles of the ruler and the Christian are clearly distinguished by the use of the third person and second person pronouns: “*he is a minister of God to you.*” Nowhere in this context is the Christian commissioned to function in the role of an instrument of God’s wrath.

Sixth, the ruler is said to “bear the sword” as a temporal “avenger of wrath” upon evildoers. Christians are clearly instructed not to avenge themselves (**Rom. 12:19**); God will

render vengeance for them; ultimately - in the judgment (**Lk. 18:8**).

The use of force is necessary to maintain order in this sinful world. Let the civil agents function as ministers of wrath in society; let Christians use themselves as ministers of reconciliation (**2 Cor. 5:17-21**), employing the “*sword of the Spirit*” (**Eph. 6:17**).

### THE CHRISTIAN’S DUTY TO GOVERNMENT

The Christian’s duty to civil government may be set forth under a threefold heading: pray, pay, and obey.

**Pray** - Scripture exhorts us to pray “*for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity*” (**1 Tim. 2:1-2**). Note, though, that the real purpose of the prayer is for the Christians’ benefit.

**Pay** - Because we do derive benefits from the government for services rendered, it is only right that we: “*Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor*” (**Rom. 13:7**). Some have suggested that a Christian may withhold his tax money if the government is involved in immoral enterprises. No, that is not the case. Governments have always promoted wickedness to some extent. The Roman government subsidized idolatry from public funds, yet Paul urged these brethren to pay taxes into that system. Thus, though governments may promote wars, finance abortions, etc., the child of God is not implicated in such evils simply because he pays taxes.

**Obey** - Finally, the Lord’s people have the obligation to “*be in subjection to the higher powers*” (**Rom. 13:1, 5; 1 Pet. 2:13-14**). We must be respectful and obedient to the rulers under which we live. The Christian should be the best possible citizen. However, our obliga-

tions to the government are not without limitations; governmental powers are not unrestricted.

### THE LIMITATIONS OF GOVERNMENT

In these times in which we live, it is very probable that there will be increasing conflict between the church of the Lord and human government. We must consider, therefore, how far we may, or may not, go in yielding to the pressures of government. Let us reflect upon the following principles.

No government has the right to prohibit that which is right. When the apostles were charged to refrain from speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus, they informed the authorities that they had a greater obligation to a higher power (**Acts 4:19-20; 5:29**). Some countries do not allow the importation of Bibles, but a Christian could take God's word to the lost anyhow! In some places it is against the law for a parent to spank his child; could not the child of God, however, lovingly administer discipline according to the principles of the Bible (**Prov. 22:15; 23:13-14**)? In California one cannot legally obtain a divorce specifically on the ground of fornication, yet the Lord certainly allowed this for the innocent party in an adulterated marriage (**Mr. 5:32; 19:9**).

No government has the right to authorize what is wrong. A nation may legalize an act, thus making it optional; yet, that act may be immoral and so not permissible. In 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand, but that does not make the bloody act moral. Drunkenness is legal, but not right. The law of the land allows divorce for every cause imaginable, but God still permits it only on the basis of fornication (**Mt. 19:9**).

No government has the right to force the Christian to violate a divine command or a biblical principle. Suppose that a civil power, upon the basis of a law that forbids sexual

discrimination in employment, issues an edict requiring the Lord's church to employ women preachers? What shall we do? We will, of course, obey God, not man. Or suppose you are a Christian employer in Berkeley, California, and you have a position open in your business establishment. Two people apply for the job. One is a Christian who is reasonably qualified for the work, but the other is a homosexual who happens to be better qualified. The law says you must hire the homosexual, but what would you do? I would not hesitate to violate such a law.

Recently I read an interesting article concerning how the Communists of Russia are training young men to infiltrate Western Europe for the purpose of subversively obtaining information that would be valuable in defense of that nation. The plan is for these men to form illicit sexual relationships with lonely secretaries and other female government workers and thereby to extract from them classified information.

Could a Christian, in the "line of duty," in the interest of national defense, commit fornication with divine approval? The concept is simply unthinkable. While we doubtless have little difficulty with the foregoing examples, for many years there has been considerable controversy in the brotherhood of Christ over whether or not the Christian may, with impunity, deliberately take the life of another human being in interest of society - either national or local. And so, we must briefly address this matter.

### THE CHRISTIAN AND CARNAL WARFARE

May a Christian, with God's blessing, take human life in defense of his nation? The great restoration preacher, Moses E. Lard, has expressed my viewpoint exactly:

"...where a State is engaged in war, and commands a Christian subject to bear arms

and fight, what is his duty? My opinion is that he must refuse obedience to the command of the State, even at the expense of his life. For no Christian man can, according to the New Testament, bear arms and take human life” (Lard, 399-400).

### MY REASONS FOR THIS CONVICTION

The Christian is never authorized to function as a punitive agent for the civil powers. While it is true, as we have observed already, that God does providentially use the powers that be to administer the sword of justice in a lawless world, he, nevertheless, has not commissioned his children to bear that sword of wrath. When Peter sought to correct the injustice of Christ’s arrest by the use of the sword, Jesus told him to put it away for *“all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”* (Mt. 26:52). Guy N. Woods has well commented: “When Peter sought to defend the Lord with a sword he was rebuked for his pains; and in bidding him sheathe it, he forevermore made it clear that his followers are not to fight with carnal weapons in his behalf. But if men are forbidden to fight in his defense, in whose defense may they properly fight?” (385).

Carnal warfare is contrary to the New Testament principles of love and peace. Any view of **Rom. 13:1-7** which contradicts, or negates the force of, dozens of New Testament passages obligating Christians to love and to be at peace with all men, is obviously incorrect [cf. **Mt. 5:21-22; 38-47; 26:52; Jn. 13:35; 18:36; Rom. 12:19-21; 14:17, 19; 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 4:2-3; 31-32; Col. 3:8; 1 Thes. 5:13, 15; 4:9; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:24; Tit. 3:2; Heb. 12:14; 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; 3:8-9; 1 Jn. 3:16,18**]. Followers of the “*Prince of Peace*” are to love their brothers (**1 Pet. 1:22**); their neighbors (**Mt. 22:39**), and their enemies

(**Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20**). Love (i.e., the Greek *agape*) always seeks nothing but the highest good of others (cf. Barclay, 174ff).

If it is argued that God loves, yet he will destroy his enemies, it may be replied: God’s destruction of his enemies will be a matter of his judgmental justice upon those who have rejected his love! He has not, however, assigned that role to us (cf. **Mt. 13:28-30**). If the Christian thus loves his brethren, neighbors, and enemies - with whom else shall he war?

If a Christian can engage in carnal warfare, the kingdom of God is subordinate to human governments. Before Pilate, Jesus laid down this logical argument concerning the nature of his kingdom. (A) If my kingdom were of this world, my servants could fight in its defense (cf. **Jn. 18:36**). (B) But my kingdom is not of this world. (C) Therefore, [implied conclusion] my servants cannot fight in defense of my kingdom.

In connection with this point, we may note the following. There is a type of argument frequently employed in the New Testament known as the *a fortiori* principle. When there are two similar propositions to be proved, if one establishes the more difficult first, the other automatically stands proved (cf. Broadus, 184). Now this: if a Christian cannot fight for the Lord’s kingdom (the greater), how in the name of reason could he war for the kingdoms of men (the lesser), which are coming to naught anyway (cf. **1 Cor. 2:6**)?!

Carnal warfare is specifically forbidden the Christian. Paul writes: “*Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds)*” (**2 Cor. 10:4**). Our battle is “*not against flesh and blood*” (**Eph. 6:12**); rather, it is spiritual. And in it, we

employ the sword of the Spirit (**Eph. 6:17**), not an instrument of blood.

### OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS CONSIDERED

Several arguments are advanced by sincere advocates of the carnal war position. We will consider the most prominent of these.

The centurion (**Mt. 8**), Cornelius (**Acts 10**), the jailor (**Acts 16**), etc., were not told to abandon their military professions; such, thus, must be acceptable to God. This argument is based solely upon silence and those who advance it will not stand with their own logic. The centurion was not instructed to free his slaves (**Mt. 8:8-9**). Are we to assume that the Lord approves of one human being owning another? Where is it specifically recorded that Rahab was commanded to forsake her harlotry (**Josh. 2**), or Simon his sorcery (**Acts 8**)?

The truth is, the Old Testament prophesied that those who entered the kingdom of Christ would become peacemakers (**Isa. 2:4; 11:6-9; 60:18; Hos. 2:8; Zech. 9:10**), not war-makers. We must assume, therefore, that sincere converts to the Savior, as they learned the principles of the gospel, forsook all occupations inconsistent with discipleship of Jesus Christ. And, as we shall subsequently point out, history bears this out.

God's children fought wars in the Old Testament era with his approval; thus, it could not be morally wrong today. The nation of Israel was a theocracy (a religious political system), and so the Lord used his people as instruments of wrath upon alien nations, and upon offenders within their own ranks as well [who will argue for the church using the death penalty for wayward members today?!]. The New Testament church is

not a theocracy. God's people are not vessels of wrath today.

Besides, many of the wars of the Old Testament period were strictly offensive, not defensive. Yet, most today would allow the Christian to fight only in a defensive encounter. No serious student of church history should fail to read J.W. McGarvey's essay "Jewish Wars As Precedents for Modern Wars," which appeared in Lard's Quarterly, Vol. 5, April, 1868, pp. 113-126.

The government is authorized to bear the sword; it cannot be right for the government and yet wrong for the Christian. While it is true that Jehovah does use human rulers to keep order in his world, this does not mean that these individuals are blameless. If those who serve as "*instruments of divine wrath*" in civil situations are blessed for functioning in that capacity, what is their reward? It is heaven?

Observe this point, please. Christ was delivered up according to the divine plan (**Acts 2:23**). But, Judas was the instrument of that deliverance (**cf. Mt. 10:4, ASV**). Hence, he was a necessary component in Jehovah's divine program. Yet, though he was used by God in this role (because of his character), his involvement was sinful (**Mt. 27:4**), and he was held accountable for it (**cf. Jn. 17:12**).

Look at another matter. The destruction of Jerusalem [A.D. 70] by the Romans was clearly the work of God. In one of his parables, Christ said that the king [God] would send his armies [the Romans] to destroy the Jews and burn their city (**Mt. 22:7**).

Was it right that God do this? Certainly. One might assume, therefore, on the basis of the argument stated above, that the early Christians could, and should, have joined with the Romans in Jerusalem's slaughter.

After all, how could it be “right” for God to do it, and, at the same time, “wrong” for the Christian to participate? But such a conclusion is clearly erroneous, for the disciples of the Lord were specifically warned to avoid that conflict; indeed, they were to flee to the mountains (**Mt. 25:15ff**).

Those who advocate the Christian’s participation in an armed defense of the nation simply cannot reconcile this New Testament example with their viewpoint.

### THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

Historically, most Christian leaders have opposed participation in carnal warfare. The non-Christian historian, Edward Gibbon, wrote the following.

“...nor could their [the Christians’] humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice or by that of war, even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. It was acknowledged that, under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defense of the empire” (416).

Noted historian Philip Schaff wrote:

“Then, too, the conscientious refusal of the Christians to pay divine honors to the emperor and his statue, and to take part in any idolatrous ceremonies at public festivities, their aversion to the imperial military ser-

vices, their disregard for politics and depreciation of all civil and temporal affairs as compared with the spiritual and eternal interests of men, their close brotherly union and frequent meetings, drew upon them the suspicion of hostility to the Caesars and the Roman people, and the unpardonable crime of conspiracy against the state” (430).

Another careful writer has observed:

“Early second-century literature gives no direct evidence in regard to Christian participation in military service. The general statements which do occur imply a negative attitude. They reflect the Christian abhorrence of bloodshed and a general Christian affirmation about peace. Only in the early 170’s do we find the first explicit evidence since apostolic times to the presence of Christians in the military service” (Ferguson, 221-222).

It is sometimes argued that the reason the early saints declined military service was mainly because of the government’s involvement with idolatry. That is not the reason given by the ancient opponents of Christian military service. They contended that God’s people ought not to be involved in military activity because it is wrong for a Christian to kill (Ferguson, 226-227).

Later, within our own American restoration movement, the list of names of those who opposed the Christian’s participation in carnal warfare reads like a Who’s Who of the brotherhood. Men like Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, P.S. Fall, B.U. Watkins, Moses Lard, J.W. McGarvey, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Milligan, W.K. Pendleton, T.M. Allen, David Lipscomb, Jacob Creath, Jr., and H. Leo Boles spoke out strongly for pacifism. Bill Humble states: “Except for Walter Scott, all the early restoration leaders had been pacifists” (44). A little later, Earl West comments,

“On the side of those who felt Christian participation permissible, there were a few leading brethren” (338).

### CONCLUSION

Christians are engaged in the greatest possible conflict - a war against Satan for the souls of men. Let us not, therefore, degrade ourselves by becoming entangled in the carnal conflicts of this world (cf. 2 Tim. 2:4) - which frequently result, in fact, in the wholesale destruction of souls.

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## MYTH BUSTERS

**“They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths”**

**(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)**

Many argue that certain instructions within the New Testament were only directly applicable to the specific cultures to whom they were addressed. However, note the following passages:

- Col. 4:16 – “*Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*”
- 1 Cor. 1:2 – “*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*”

Col. 4:16 teaches that the contents of New Testament epistles would at least be repeated to other Christians elsewhere. In fact, the physical letters themselves would often be circulated throughout other churches in the region (James 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Rev. 1:4). Beyond that, 1 Cor. 1:2 teaches that the letter to Corinth applied to “*all*” Christians in “*every place*.” Why, then, do so many today believe we can make vastly different applications of very specific instructions found in these epistles due to our cultures being different? Cultures continually change but God’s word always remains the same (1 Pet. 1:22-25). (DTS)

## A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).

### Elder’s Children – Singular or Plural?

CARROL SUTTON

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In discussing the qualifications of bishops (also called elders) the apostle Paul uses the word “*children*” in **1 Tim. 3:4** and **Tit. 1:6**. The verses read as follows:

- **1 Tim. 3:4** – “*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.*”
- **Tit. 1:6** – “*If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*”

It is obvious from a reading of these inspired verses that in order for a man to qualify to be a bishop (i.e., an elder) he must have “*children*.” The context of these verses indicates the necessity of such. **1 Tim. 3:2** begins by saying, “*A bishop then MUST,*” and **Tit. 1:7** says, “*For a bishop MUST.*” Our likes, dislikes, preferences or traditions should not be a factor for determining what we accept as we consider the qualifications of bishops. We can learn what those qualifications are by a study of the texts and contexts in which they are found. Of course, we study the texts and contexts in consideration of all Scriptural principles.

The term CHILDREN is a translation of the Greek word TEKNA. Both the Greek word TEKNA and the English word CHILDREN are plural in form. TEKNA is plural of TEKNON which means CHILD, according to Thayer’s Lexicon, p 617. CHILDREN is plural of CHILD, according to Webster’s

New Collegiate Dictionary. The singular (form of a word) indicates “that only one is meant” and the plural (form of a word) shows “that more than one is meant,” according to Webster’s New World Dictionary and Student Handbook (Elementary Edition). Words that are singular in number indicate one and words that are plural in number indicate more than one.

#### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MEANINGS

Words always have a primary meaning and may have a secondary meaning. We use lexicons, dictionaries, and common usage to determine primary and secondary meanings. We adopt the primary, ordinary meaning of words unless it is forbidden by the context or by some other Scriptural statement or principle. We have no right to arbitrarily place a secondary, abnormal meaning on a word. We should accept the primary, normal meaning of a word unless we are “forbidden” to do so by either the context or the teaching of another passage. If another passage teaches to the contrary, then we must not adopt the primary meaning, but we must accept the secondary (such as class or other figurative usage) meaning.

To illustrate the above, let us consider the word WATER in **John 3:5** where Jesus said, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*” What does “*water*” mean? It’s prima-

ry, ordinary, normal meaning is water (i.e., a colorless liquid that falls as rain and is found in rivers, lakes and oceans). Is this meaning “forbidden” by the context? Is it prohibited by some other Scriptural statement or principle? Should we adopt the primary, normal meaning of water in this passage? It seems to me that we should. Do we have the right to place a secondary meaning on the word “water” as used in this passage? Could we say that “water” in John 3:5 means “living water?” If not, why not? We do have “water” used in the sense of “living water” in **John 4:10-15**. No, we do not have the right to place a secondary, abnormal meaning on water just because it is so used elsewhere. We must give the primary, normal meaning to “water” in **John 3:5** because such is not “forbidden” by either the context or by some other Scriptural statement or principle.

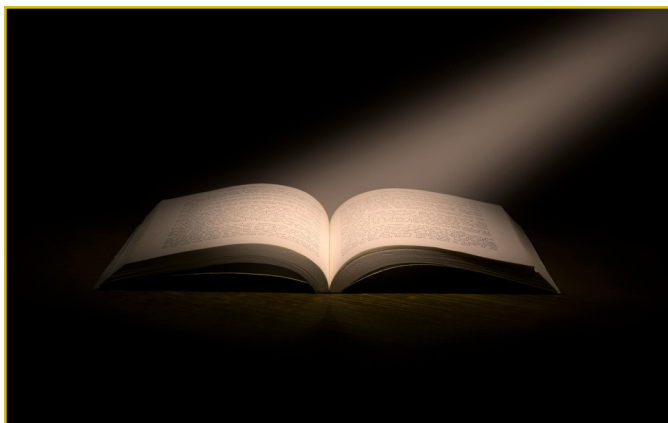
The same can be said of the word “water” in **John 4:7** which says, *“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith to her, Give me to drink.”* WATER in this verse means WATER! However, “water” in **John 4:14** (which says: *“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”*) does not mean literal WATER! It means “living water!” The context “forbids” the primary, normal meaning of water (see **John 4:10-15**). Here in **John 4:14** we MUST adopt a secondary meaning. The same is true of “water” in **Rev. 22:17**. Note: The fact that “water” in **John 4:10, 11 & 14** is used to mean living water does not mean that “water” in **John 3:5** and/or in **John 4:7** means living water. A consideration of **Matt. 8:22** (and **Luke 9:60**) where Jesus said, *“Let the dead bury their dead,”* will show contextually

that the word “dead” as first used must have a secondary meaning while we must adopt the primary, normal meaning of “dead” as last used in the statement.

The word “build” (from the Greek word oikodoemo), as used in **Mark 14:58**, is used with respect to building the temple and in **Matt 16:18** with respect to building the church. Should we adopt the primary, normal meaning of constructing a house in the case of building the temple and thus to bring into being? With reference to building the church should we adopt the primary meaning (used metaphorically) of building or founding? Or should we use the secondary meaning of edifying? “Build” is used in **Acts 20:32** in the sense of “edify.” Should we say “edify the temple” and “edify the church” (**Mt. 16:18**) because the “build” means to edify in **Acts 20:32**?

#### 1 TIMOTHY 3:4 AND TITUS 1:6

Both **1 Tim. 3:4** and **Tit. 1:6** use the word TEKNA in the Greek and CHILDREN in the English translations. CHILDREN is plural in form and means “more than one is meant.” This is the primary, normal usage. There is nothing in the context that “forbids” this primary, normal meaning. There is no Scriptural statement or principle that “prohibits” this primary, normal meaning. In view of these facts and also the fact that there is no Scriptural statement or principle that requires the adoption of a secondary or unusual meaning such as class or some other figurative usage, CHILDREN must be understood in its primary usage. Until someone can show from the Scriptures some good reason for saying that CHILDREN in these verses is singular in application, we must conclude that CHILDREN in **1 Tim. 3:4** and **Tit. 1:6** obviously means CHILDREN! Since it is plural, “more than one is meant.”



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