

**OBEYING GOD**



**RATHER THAN MEN**

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## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1 How to Pray for Governmental Leaders.....	3
Chapter 2 Render to Caesar . . . . .	7
Chapter 3 In What Way Are Rulers Not a Terror to Good Works? .....	9
Chapter 4 In What Way Are Governmental Officials "God's Ministers?" .....	13
Chapter 5 When Are Governmental Officials Established as "God's Ministers?" .....	17
Chapter 6 Is It a Sin to Vote in Governmental Elections? ...	21
Chapter 7 Is It Sin for a Christian to Serve on a Jury? .	25
Chapter 8 Is It Sin for a Christian to Join the Military and Fight in War? .....	27
Chapter 9 What Is the Mark of the Beast? .....	31
Will You Accept the Mark of the Beast? .....	36
What the Mark of the Beast Means for Us Today .....	37
The Mark of the Beast in Its Wider Application .....	38
Anointing .....	39
Preaching the Gospel .....	40
Worshipping and Serving God Alone .....	40
When NOT to Obey.....	42
Obey or Submit to the Penalty — What It Does Not Mean! .....	44
Conclusion .....	47

Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy  
Obeying God Rather than Men  
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?  
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*  
Paul's Letter to the Galatians—*How to Understand It*  
Paul's Letter to the Philippians—*How to Understand It*  
Punishment for Our Sins  
Should YOU Fight in War?  
Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us  
Teach Us to Pray!  
The Authority of the Bible  
The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for *Today!*  
The Fall and Rise of Britain and America  
The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People  
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God  
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord  
The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families  
The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days  
The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days  
The Mysteries of the Bible  
The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness  
The Ten Commandments  
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire  
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?  
Tithing—Today?  
When and How Will Christ Return?

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God Is a Family  
God's Commanded Holy Days  
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Is God a Trinity?  
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days  
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation  
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## Introduction

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The title for this booklet was inspired by Peter's famous saying in Acts 5:29 and also in Acts 4:19. The Sanhedrin had prohibited the apostles from teaching the Truth in the name of Jesus Christ, but they steadfastly refused. They were threatened and arrested and in danger of being executed, but were freed by an angel and continued to preach the Truth. They were arrested again and severely beaten, but then let go.

Peter's saying and the underlying circumstances have been quoted and told endless times over the centuries, and many Christians have suffered martyrdom for obeying God rather than men. But as time went by, the meaning of what this passage actually conveys became more and more blurred in the minds of many, and we are warned that in these last days many would fall away from the Truth, would lose God's love and be willing to compromise with God's Word, and even betray others in order to escape punishment from the government.

Christ warns us that if we belong to those who are ashamed of Him and His Words, He will reject us when He returns, and God's wrath will be upon us.

What does it mean to you to obey God rather than men? Have you, in your own mind, concluded that in certain circumstances, it would be justifiable to disobey God in order to follow man's directives and injunctions so that you can escape the government's punishment? Are you perhaps too quick to follow the government's orders or guidelines, without asking whether they are in accordance with God's Will for His people?

Have you perhaps concluded that you must submit to civil leaders in every aspect of life because they are "God's appointed ministers" who do not carry the sword in vain, and because you are to pray for them? Do you think that you can love and serve God and this world at the same time?

We must understand that this is not God's world. This society is ruled by Satan the devil, the god of this world. Is it therefore our responsibility to try to make this world a better place by getting involved in politics and vote

in governmental elections in order to replace one evil ruler with another one? Are we ever permitted to resort to violence in an attempt to bring about a change in the human rule of the country we might be living in?

We say this in our *Statement of Beliefs*, under “Civic Government”:

“We believe that we are to be subject to the government of our country and its laws (Romans 13:1–5; 1 Peter 2:13–17); that we are to pay our taxes (Matthew 22:17–21; Mark 12:14–17; Romans 13:6–7); that we are to pray for leaders of government (1 Timothy 2:1–3); and that we are to honor those leaders (1 Peter 2:17; Romans 13:7).”

However, we also state this in our *Statement of Beliefs*, under “Relationship with God”:

“We believe that a Christian’s duty to God is of a superior and higher nature than our duty arising from any human relationship (Acts 4:18–20; 5:27–29). We therefore, following biblical commands and principles, do not participate in voting for national elections or jury duty, and we do not join the military. On the other hand, we do not object to participation in civil service. If compelled by governments to enlist, we refuse to serve in any capacity that would violate the spirit of the sixth commandment against murder (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12:17–21).”

On the other hand, some preach that Christians should participate in violent activity in protecting their own nation and themselves! But is this what Jesus Christ taught or exemplified?

When we read that we ought to pray for the leaders of our human government, and to honor and submit to those leaders, does this mean that we should pray to God to bless them, even though they lead sinful lives, make and enforce ungodly laws, and propagate and even try to mandate sinful conduct? If not, how and for what should we pray? And what does “submission” to the government really mean... and what doesn’t it mean?

This booklet will thoroughly explain what God requires of you as an uncompromising Christian, in spite of any and all obstacles. We will first establish what our general relationship and attitude toward our governmental leaders should be, before addressing in detail what it means to obey God rather than men, even though this important Truth is alluded to and referenced throughout the entire booklet. We will also address the all-important meaning of the “mark of the beast,” and how it relates to us today.

## Conclusion

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In this booklet we have tried to point out the proper and right relationship of a Christian toward the government of the country in which he lives, and to explain what to do in times of conflict between the directives of the human government and God’s Will for His people. Many more examples could be given, of course, but the ones mentioned should suffice to help you to resolve in your own mind what to do when a difficult conflict situation arises, so that you will not be found unprepared.

As we draw nearer to Christ’s return, mankind will move further and further away from the Truth of God and they will completely submit to unrighteous and ungodly decrees of the governments. The Bible even says that because the love of God will grow cold in many Christians, they will hate and betray one another—they might become informers to their government regarding their relatives, friends and neighbors who will not succumb to rules and regulations contrary to the dictates of God.

We should not be surprised when this happens, but we must stand strong in the faith when our obedience toward God is being tested.

# Chapter 1

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## How to Pray for Governmental Leaders

Some claim that we must pray for God's blessing of governmental leaders so that they will be successful in their office even though what they stand for is detrimentally opposite to God's Way of Life. Is this what we ought to do?

To properly understand what Paul is saying—and what he is not saying—in regard to this question, let us read 1 Timothy 2:1–7, in context:

“(1) Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for ALL MEN, (2) for kings and all who are in authority, THAT WE MAY LEAD A QUIET AND PEACEABLE LIFE in all godliness and reverence. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires ALL MEN to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is ONE God and ONE Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself a ransom FOR ALL, to be testified in due time, (7) for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”

How, exactly, are we to pray for governmental leaders?

The *Life Application Bible* explains:

“Paul's command to pray for kings was remarkable considering that Nero, a notoriously cruel ruler, was emperor at this time (A.D. 54–68). When Paul wrote this letter, persecution was a growing threat to believers. Later, when Nero needed a scapegoat for the great fire that destroyed much of Rome in A.D. 64, he blamed the Roman Christians so as to take the focus off himself. Then persecution erupted throughout the Roman empire. Not only were Christians denied certain privileges in society, some were even publicly butchered, burned, or fed to animals...”

With this background, the commentary continues:

“... we should pray for those in authority around the world so that their societies will be *conducive to the spread of the gospel*.”

This is a correct statement, as far as it goes. True Christians ARE to pray that God would influence leaders, especially in societies hostile to Christianity, to allow the unhindered and *unrestricted preaching of the true gospel* (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:1). Paul is not telling us here that we are to necessarily pray for the conversion of these leaders—God will convert people in His due time—but that they be motivated to make decisions allowing us to lead peaceful and quiet lives. We are not asked to pray that God would reward evil leaders for and in their sins.

We are to pray even for our enemies (compare Matthew 5:44), not that they will be blessed in their sins, but that they perhaps change their way of life (compare Romans 12:20). The king of Nineveh and the entire city-state repented of their evil deeds when they heard Jonah’s warning, and, as a consequence, they were spared from destruction. Jonah should have prayed for such a change in the minds of the people, but he did not. This should be a lesson for us today, not to act and think as Jonah did at that time.

There are occasions, of course, when we are *not* to pray for a particular governmental leader. After God rejected King Saul, He told Samuel to cease mourning for the king (compare 1 Samuel 16:1).

At the same time, we are asked to *pray with thanksgiving*. This may be easy to do when we are living in peace. It is more difficult to do when we are encountering persecution. But still, we need to include in our supplications and intercessions the giving of thanks in and even for those circumstances. We know that nothing just “happens” in our lives of which God is unaware. Whatever God allows is for a reason.

*John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* explains the phrase, “that we may *lead a quiet and peaceable life*, in all godliness and honesty,” in the following way:

“... since the hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord, and he can turn them as he pleases, prayer should be made to him [God] for them [kings, etc.], that he [God] would... at least so dispose their hearts and minds, that they might *stop the persecution*, and so saints might live peaceably under them...”

*Vincent’s Word Studies* adds that we are to pray for governmental

When *Jesus* was told that King Herod was trying to arrest Him, or that the religious authorities were plotting to capture Him, Christ did not voluntarily surrender; instead, He let Herod know that He still had a job to do.

*Moses’ parents* found a way to save their little child; they did not simply wait until the government came to them to kill it.

The *harlot Rahab* acted similarly when she hid the spies and helped them to escape the city of Jericho. In doing so, she saved her life and that of her household.

The most obvious example of a godly and even commanded escape from governmental confinement can be seen in *Peter and other early apostles*. We read in Acts 5:17–25 that the government arrested the apostles but that an *angel of the Lord* opened the prison doors for them and brought them out of prison so that they could continue to preach the Truth. The apostles did not react by saying, we cannot leave prison because it would violate the government’s order to keep us incarcerated.

Later, in Acts 12:3–19, King Herod imprisoned Peter, but an *angel of the Lord* freed him supernaturally, and after showing himself to the brethren, he went away and hid himself so that Herod could not find him.

All of these examples show that it was God’s Will for His servants to escape from the ungodly punishment of the unjust human government; in some cases, He even supernaturally intervened to make such escape possible.

In the future, God’s Church is described as *fleeing to a place of safety* here on earth from governmental authorities. Even though we do not know exactly how this flight will transpire, the point is that it is God who will set in motion such a “flight” to protect His people from governments under Satan’s control, and He will even intervene when the governmental armies are trying to capture and kill God’s people. If someone, falsely understanding the relationship between God’s and men’s prerogatives, would feel that he cannot flee as this would violate the government’s orders, he would most certainly not be taken to the place of safety, but he would be left behind and suffer the terrible consequences of his misguided and faulty perception.



A citizen must refuse an order of the government to serve in the *military* in a combatant capacity and to fight in war, even if this means suffering the fate of a “traitor.” In World War I and World War II, conscientious objectors were executed or severely mistreated on all sides. This will clearly be the case in the coming World War III.

### *Obey or Submit to the Penalty—What It Does Not Mean!*

Some have a terribly distorted understanding of a Christian’s duty and obligation toward human governments, thinking that they must either obey, no matter what, or that they must always submit to and accept the penalty imposed upon them if they disobey. They do not feel that there could be any “middle ground,” but that is not what the Bible teaches.

It should be clear, of course, that we can resort to *legal channels* when a penalty imposed on us is deemed to be wrong or unjustified or in violation of our constitutional rights, including our rights of religious worship and assembly or the freedom of expression of our opinion. In many countries, such freedoms do not exist, however. In what way then is it the duty of a Christian to submit to the penalty of the government? It is clear that a Christian cannot resort to violence against the government, but what does the Bible say, for example, about becoming a *fugitive from the law*?

Many democratic and civilized countries recognize that this must be allowed in certain circumstances, and they offer *asylum* to those who have been persecuted in their country for practicing their religious convictions, and who have fled their country to seek shelter and refuge in another country. *Joseph and Mary* were told by an angel of God to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus, as King Herod was trying to capture and kill Him.

The Bible makes it very clear that a Christian can try to escape from governmental measures—whether legal or not, judged by human standards—if those measures are in violation of the Word of God.

When King Saul tried to kill *David*, David hid and then escaped. He did not wait for Saul to capture and execute him. He repeatedly escaped when Saul pursued him.

When the *prophet Elijah* heard that Queen Jezebel was trying to capture and kill him, he escaped and fled as well.

leaders that we may lead a “quiet and peaceable life,” by explaining that “quiet” arises “from the absence of outward disturbance,” while “peaceable” or “with tranquility” arises “from within.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* states:

“Good rulers have power to do much good; we pray that their authority may be ever preserved and well directed. Bad rulers have power to do much evil; we pray that they *may be prevented from thus using their power*. So that, whether the rulers be good or bad, prayer for them is the positive duty of all Christians; and the answer to their prayers, in either [case], will be the means of their being enabled to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* writes that we ought to pray for governmental leaders so “That their hearts may be so inclined to what is right that they may *protect us in the enjoyment of religion*, and that we may not be opposed or harassed by persecution.”

We are instructed to include governmental leaders in our prayers so that we may be able to lead quiet and peaceable lives, enabling us to preach the gospel of the peaceful Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness and to assemble in peace on God’s weekly and annual Feast Days. We are not asked to pray for the conversion of our leaders, but rather, that they may be motivated not to persecute us or that they be induced to cease from their persecution.

Our prayers for governmental leaders with the goal of leading peaceful lives would also include praying that, subject to God’s Will, our leaders do not decide to go to war, and that they are motivated to end whatever wars their nations might be engaged in. In this world of hatred, violence and war, such kinds of prayers are necessary and very pleasing to God. In times of crisis, we should also pray that our leaders make right and godly decisions so as to enable God’s people to obey His command to assemble on His weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:1–3, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’”

As children, we are to obey our parents *in the Lord*. This means, we are not to obey them if it would *not be* in the Lord—that is, if it would be in contradiction to God’s commandments—either from a literal or a spiritual standpoint. Once a child is old enough to understand God’s Way of Life, he or she must follow God.

Christ did just that. He told His parents, when He was twelve years old, that He had to be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49). Yet, as a young child, He remained obedient to His mother and His stepfather (Luke 2:51), when He could do so without violating God’s Will for Him. Even as an adult, He honored His mother’s wish to change water into wine (John 2:1–11). He did not obey His mother, however, when it was contrary to the Will of God. When He was busy teaching and His mother asked Him to come out of the house to see her, He refused (Mark 3:31–35; Matthew 12:46–50).

Notice also Colossians 3:20, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” We must obey our parents in all things, unless the instructions of our parents contradict the letter or the spirit of God’s Word. It is *never* well-pleasing to God if we disobey *Him*. Children must not obey their parents, if this would violate God’s Law. They are not to lie or to steal or to kill or to dishonor God or to break His Sabbath or to keep Christmas and Easter with them in “obedience” to their parents’ “orders.”

The principle of obeying God rather than men applies to parents who are ordered to send their *children to school* on the Sabbath or the Holy Days and who are told that in case of disobedience, a fine might be imposed upon them. Great caution and diplomacy are of course required by the parents, and much prayer and fasting that God would graciously intervene and make it possible that the children can keep His Holy Days. In addition, rather than just giving in, all legal channels and avenues should be used to fight such ungodly orders.

A Christian *employee* must refuse the order of his boss who “governs” over the employee, to work on the Sabbath, even if this could mean the loss of his job.

good to evil." When he was then threatened with fire, he said: "Your fire burns only a short time, then flickers out; but you are ignorant of the judgment to come of everlasting fire prepared for the wicked."

We are told that when he was burned, the fire did not consume him, and he only died when the executioner stabbed him with a dagger. We are also told that he died on the seventh day of the week, the "great Sabbath."

How would many Christians react in such a situation today? Would they argue that this is just a minor infraction of God's laws, if at all, and that they therefore could do so publicly to save their lives, claiming and convincing themselves that in their hearts, they had not denied or cursed Christ?

### *When NOT to Obey*

The principle of obeying God rather than men applies to so many scenarios. In the context of "government" in our private homes, it applies for instance to a *wife* who must refuse to obey or submit to her husband who requires of her to do something which violates God's Will in letter or spirit.

Notice Colossians 3:18, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." Note the fact that it would not be fitting or pleasing to the Lord, if the husband gave unreasonable orders; if he acted selfishly; or if he ceased to love his wife. Although the command to be submissive is directed to the wife, it presupposes that the husband himself submits to God first and that he does not require of his wife things that are *ungodly*. For instance, if a husband asks his wife to lie, the wife is not to do that. God's commands always come first. Wives must not sin in "submitting" to their husbands. They must not violate their biblically-based conscience (cp. Romans 14:23).

Notice Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord..." Note again that we do not submit to God if we break His commandments. Likewise, wives are not to submit to their husbands if doing so would mean breaking one of God's commandments *in the letter or in the spirit*.

The principle of obeying God rather than men applies to *children* who must not obey their parents if they are ordered to disobey God's Word.

## Chapter 2

### Render to Caesar . . .

Jesus taught that we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (compare Matthew 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26), thus showing that He was subject to man's laws, including paying taxes, so long as there was no conflict with God's Law. And that applies to us today.

In Titus 3:1, Titus is instructed by Paul to "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work."

In 1 Peter 2:13–17, the same principle is repeated: "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men – as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

In Acts 4:18, the civil and religious authorities commanded Peter and John "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." But in verses 19–21 we read: "But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' So, when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done."

In this instance, they defied the secular authorities so that they could do the Will of God and no punishment beyond threats was forthcoming. Shortly thereafter, in order to follow God's command to preach the Truth, they again had to disobey the secular authorities and were severely punished as a consequence (Acts 5:17–32, 40). But in spite of their punishment and the ongoing threats of the government,

the apostles defied the order of the civil counsel, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (verse 41). And they continued to disobey the orders of the government while obeying God’s explicit instructions to announce and teach His plan of salvation (verse 42).

Today, God’s Church has the commission and responsibility to preach the gospel and to feed the flock. We will discuss later what this means, specifically.

In short, our submission to governing authorities does not mean uncritical obedience, as our highest authority is God. Laws that are contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Law of God must not be obeyed, but in such situations, we must be willing to accept the consequences of our actions, without resorting to violent civil disobedience.

In light of the foregoing, the next several chapters will discuss Paul’s statements in Romans 13, which can be easily misunderstood and misinterpreted, if we are not careful. After all, Romans 13:1–2 states: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are *appointed* by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”

Do those passages mean that God appoints directly every human authority, and that we must therefore obey human laws in every respect—no questions asked?

king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

What needs to be stressed here is that the King let them be cast into the fiery furnace, but that God saved them supernaturally. When *Daniel* was cast into the lions’ den for obeying and worshipping God and disobeying the order of King Darius not to pray to God, God likewise protected and saved him supernaturally. Again, Daniel’s answer to the King after his rescue is quite remarkable:

“My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you” (Daniel 6:22). Verse 23 adds that God protected him and that “no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.”

In times of great distress and persecution, we must never forget that the all-powerful God is on our side and will protect us or that He will give us the necessary strength to endure a particular trial, and that NOTHING will happen to us which is too difficult for us to handle, and that God will always show us *the way of escape* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In the past, emperors and dictators would order their subjects to accept so-called Christianity and to participate in mass “baptisms” with the threat of death for non-compliance. If something like this were to occur today, how would God’s people respond to such orders?

At other times, governments would require of their subjects to disassociate themselves from the true God and to openly repudiate and deny Him.

True Christians refused to do so and were sometimes tortured and killed as a consequence. We are told that Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, being 86 years old, refused the order of the government to curse Christ and instead to declare that “Caesar is Lord” and to sacrifice to his image. A recent plague and an earthquake had convinced the people that the gods were angry because Christians lived in the city. When threatened with death, Polycarp answered, “Eighty-six years have I served Him and He never did me any wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me? Hear my confession—I am a Christian.”

When the proconsul threatened him with wild beasts, Polycarp answered: “Call for them. I am unalterably resolved not to repent from

*conduct marriages*, as all these procedures require the laying on of hands to set the persons aside for a holy and righteous purpose. Already in Old Testament times, it was understood as symbolizing the imparting of godly blessings (Genesis 48:13–20), His authority and spiritual power (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9).

### *Preaching the Gospel*

A government might also prohibit God's Church from preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Would ministers in God's Church acquiesce to such a demand? Or, a government might not prohibit the preaching entirely, but it might seriously limit it to only those statements that are deemed politically correct. It might prohibit preaching God's Truth about sin, including homosexuality, abortion, voting, jury duty or fighting in war. How far would ministers in God's Church be willing to go to obey the government so that they could at least preach "some" of the Truth? Do we believe that God would be pleased with such compromising and condescending attitude, or would He not want His Church to preach the "full counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), no matter how "offensive" it might be to other people and to the government?

### *Worshipping and Serving God Alone*

What if a government would issue a decree prohibiting the worship of the true God, or enjoining the worship of the "god" of their choosing? What if our children would be commanded in school to pray to pagan gods or to the "Virgin Mary"?

Daniel's three friends refused to fall down and worship before a statue of Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel refused to obey a governmental decree not to worship God any longer and not to pray to God. In both cases, they refused to follow those directives, and serious punishment was the consequence.

In this regard, the answer of the *three friends* to Nebuchadnezzar is quite remarkable. When the King ordered them to fall down and worship his image and threatened them in case of disobedience with their execution in the fiery furnace, they responded:

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O

## Chapter 3

### In What Way Are Rulers Not a Terror to Good Works?

In Romans 13:3, Paul also says that "rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil." He is talking about rulers in general, who uphold certain laws to guarantee a civil, peaceful and harmonious lifestyle amongst their citizens. Paul is referring to the submission to (verse 5) and the enforcement of civil and criminal laws (verse 4), such as theft or murder.

Paul is *not* talking here about the Hitlers or Neros, etc., who are encouraging their citizens to betray Christians or the Jews so that they can be killed. We need to remember Christ's statement to OBEY the Pharisees in all that they tell the people, but later, Peter did *not* obey them when they told him not to preach in the name of Christ. Christ would not obey them, either, to follow their rules of ceremonial washing, or to have no contact with "sinners."

So, Christ was talking about matters which were *not in conflict* with God's Word. [Notice, too, that John the Baptist openly rebuked Herod for committing adultery with his brother's wife. (Luke 3:19–20).]

In John 19:11, Christ told Pilate, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the GREATER sin."

Christ is giving here an implicit forewarning of accountability and judgment on those who are evil, including rulers. We are to be ambassadors of Christ and of the Kingdom of God. As such, we are still subject to the laws of man, as long as they are not in conflict with the laws of God.

Also, in Luke 4:6, Satan states to Christ that all authority over the kingdoms of this world has presently been given to Satan, and that it is he who gives it to whomever he wishes. Christ does not dispute this claim. In fact, we read that Satan is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), who

still has a throne on this earth (Revelation 2:13). He and his demons are the current rulers over this world (Ephesians 6:12), inspiring civil leaders to obey their will (1 Corinthians 2:7–8).

Today, this world is cut off from God, and it is subject to the rule of Satan. God had placed Lucifer on the throne of this earth, but he rebelled and became known as Satan. When he inspired Adam and Eve to sin, God gave mankind 6,000 years to find out for themselves that we need God. Still, God decreed that Satan is to remain on his throne, until Jesus Christ comes back to replace him and to restore the government of God on this earth.

*In that sense, there is “no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1), and all authority “has been given from above” (John 19:11), in that God had placed Lucifer on this earthly throne; in that He has not yet replaced Satan and his demons; and in that they cannot do anything which God does not ALLOW them to do. At times, God might even directly intervene to ensure that a particular person takes over rulership in a particular country, so that God’s overall plan for mankind can be fulfilled. But, we are not to follow them, or their laws, when they oppose God.*

In fact, Jesus Christ has qualified to replace Satan’s rule over this earth (John 12:31; 16:33), but that will only occur when He returns to establish the Kingdom and Government of God on this earth (Revelation 11:15) Until then, Christians are to serve as ambassadors of that FUTURE Government (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* has this to say about Romans 13:3:

“...State officials as rulers deserve the loyalty of Christians *only when they do approve good conduct* (vv. 3–4a). The *corrupt politicians* who appeal to the Christian conscience to protect their unjust reign of terror and tyranny should be totally *repudiated*... As God’s public servant, the ruler is to promote the good against the bad” (p. 257).

The German “*Lexikon zur Bibel*,” by Fritz Rienecker, points out, under “governing authorities” [“Obrigkeit”]:

“The Bible instructs us, because of God, to obey the governing authorities (Romans 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13–14), and to pray for them (Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:2) [in the sense as discussed before]. The reason is, that every authority is appointed by God [in the sense as explained above] and that it is His servant (Romans 13:1, 4)...There

*Babylonian system*—concepts of men in opposition to the Truth of God. As such, the issue we are addressing here is wide-ranging.

### *Anointing*

For instance, God’s ministers are commanded to feed the flock. Zechariah 11:16 warns us of a worthless shepherd who will not feed or *heal* Church members. Ezekiel 34:4 applies this to other shepherds as well. God’s true ministers have a duty to anoint those with oil who are sick (James 5:14), which includes the laying on of hands (Luke 4:40; Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8).

But in times of the existence of a real or perceived virus that is allegedly being transferred through touch or close proximity (“social distancing” is supposed to prevent this from happening), a government might prohibit such a practice of anointing.

It is true that God allows His ministers to prepare and send out an *anointed cloth* instead, when person-to-person anointing is not possible (compare Acts 19:11–12). This is mainly meant for cases of great distance. In any event, what happens if this procedure is prohibited as well? Pretty soon, we might be labeled by God as worthless shepherds if we refuse to anoint the sick. Some might want to agree with the government that for the greater good and the health of the public, laying on of hands by a minister should be omitted, without considering that God has shown over many years that, due to His protection, His anointing ministers will be *immune* from contracting the disease of the sick person.

We are also told that in times past, when pestilence struck Alexandria and Carthage, Christians remained to care for the sick well after pagans had fled. What a contrast with situations today when senior citizens are being abandoned in Christian countries during a pandemic and die a lonesome death.

Conflict may arise when a government, perhaps due to fear of a virus which might allegedly be transmitted by touch or close proximity, prohibits the practice of *baptizing or ordaining a person*, which requires the laying on of hands by the minister on the person (compare Acts 8:12–17; 19:5–6; Acts 6:2–6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6). In addition, a government might prohibit Church ministers to *bless little children* (Mark 10:16; compare Matthew 19:13–15) or to

to worship on God's weekly and annual Sabbaths.

But how does this play out in practice when the government prohibits Christian churches to meet and assemble on the Sabbath? They might not even place this prohibition under a religious mantle, but they might give some other reasons, such as the outbreak of a pandemic that would require people to stay at home. The weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days are commanded biblical *holy assemblies or holy convocations* (compare Leviticus 23). We should ask ourselves whether refusing to follow God's command, because the government says so, would be pleasing to God (compare Hebrews 10:25; the *Living Bible* states: "Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near").

In the past, some Church groups have been far too quick to follow the *guidance* (not even at first a directive) of a particular government and have prohibited worship services *worldwide* for all of their members, even though the government of one particular country did not speak for other countries, and even though an alleged pandemic had not even reached some of the countries in which members lived. Other Church groups followed the subsequent *directive* of the government of their country, but did not limit their prohibition of services to that country, but prohibited all their members *worldwide* to meet anywhere.

In this day and age, we have the means of broadcasting sermons live over the Internet to the homes of Church members, which we can resort to on a *temporary* basis, when physical person-to-person meetings and assemblies with the brethren are not possible. But what happens if a government would prohibit such services as well? How far would we go to follow governmental rules which would prohibit religious services in any manner and of any kind?

Christians in the early Church were forced to meet in secret, in catacombs, in order to escape the fury of the Roman government. When they were caught, they were severely punished, but they were willing to obey God rather than men.

### ***The Mark of the Beast in Its Wider Application***

In a sense, the mark of the beast is the political, economic, philosophical, religious and military application of the rule of the *modern*

is, however, a *limit to obedience*. That limit is reached, when the instructions of the authority prevent a human being from obeying God (Acts 4:19; 5:29). This freedom, not to follow the will of the authority, Peter defends before the spiritual authority of his own people."

When addressing Paul's comment that "rulers are not terrors to good works" (Romans 13:3), *Blunt's* commentary points out:

"The Apostle is obviously speaking of rulers *as they ought to be*, not finding it necessary for the purpose of his argument to speak of them otherwise, by taking into account the infirmities and the wickedness which have sometimes made them a terror to others than evil-doers."

This should be self-evident, but gullible and ignorant readers, or even deceitful teachers of the Bible, have far too often missed or misrepresented this obvious caveat.

Paul also states in Romans 13 that the governing authority is "God's minister." What he meant by that is explained in the next chapter of this booklet.

and great glory.” Because of their fearful expectations, they will have “no rest day or night” prior to their death (Revelation 14:11).

As in the past, true Christians will be persecuted by the final European revival of the ancient Roman Empire for following God’s commands of keeping and worshipping God on the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, while rejecting the observance of pagan holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or New Year’s.

In the *History of the Norwegian Church*, under the years 1435 and 1436, appears the following: “We counsel all the friends of God throughout all Norway who want to be obedient towards the holy church to let this evil of Saturday-keeping alone [so there existed Sabbath-keeping Christians at that time]; and the rest we forbid under penalty of severe church punishment to keep Saturday holy. It is forbidden under the same penalty to keep Saturday holy by refraining from labor.”

Here is a report from 1618 about a Mrs. Trask, a Sabbatarian in *England*: “At last for teaching only five days a week [she was a teacher, but refused to teach on the Sabbath], and resting upon Saturday she was carried to the new prison in Maiden Lane. . . . Mrs. Trask lay fifteen or sixteen years a prisoner for her opinion about the Saturday Sabbath.” She chose to follow the Bible and the Bible alone!

In 1604 in *Ethiopia*, there were some who kept the Sabbath, but due to the influence of the Jesuits, the king of Ethiopia prohibited his subjects, upon severe penalties, to observe Saturday any longer.

Much has been written about the *Waldenses*. They taught and kept the Sabbath, for which they were severely persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church. Citing from *A General History of the Sabbatarian Churches*, pages 88 and 89, “Of the many who were burned, and otherwise destroyed for Judaism, observes a Spanish author of the sixteenth century, it is not probable that one-tenth were of the race of Israel, but heretics, who, for persisting in saying that the law of Moses was still binding, were accused of Jewish practices, such as circumcision and sabbatizing, to the latter of which [Sabbath keeping] they uniformly plead guilty.”

### ***What the Mark of the Beast Means for Us Today***

True Christians understand that the Sabbath and the Holy Days must be kept, and that they must not instead accept the mark of the beast by worshipping on Sunday and pagan holidays, and by refusing



the new faith attractive to Gentiles who were already steeped in pagan customs. These pagan customs were placed under a “Christian” mantle so that they would have the appearance of being godly. Traditional Christianity clearly violates God’s command not to learn our ways of worship from the Gentiles, not to add pagan elements to holy worship, and not to delete godly elements that are to be observed, such as the weekly and annual Holy Days. Traditional Christianity has, in effect, already accepted the mark of the Beast by embracing human traditions that violate God’s laws.

### ***Will You Accept the Mark of the Beast?***

In these present times and in the months and years ahead, it will become increasingly important for all of us to draw very near to God! We must stand firm in the face of challenges and persecution. We must be faithful in observing God’s laws regarding the weekly and annual Sabbaths, which identify us as HIS people (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). We must also reject the religiously inspired “mark” of the revived Roman Empire, which will enforce the false religious doctrines of the fallen woman, rewarding those who will observe them, while persecuting those who won’t.

God’s punishment and His wrath will be poured out over everyone who worships the beast and his image, and who receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand. We read that he “shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the PRESENCE of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10).

Compare also 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9, which explains what will happen “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the PRESENCE of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Even before fire destroys them, they will live in fear of their future. Compare Luke 21:26–27: “...men’s hearts [will be] failing them from fear and expectation of those things which are coming on the earth... Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the cloud with power

## Chapter 4

### In What Way Are Governmental Officials “God’s Ministers?”

When Paul said that political governmental officials can be viewed as “God’s ministers,” he had in mind that true Christians are to be subject to duly constituted human authority. They are not to rebel against it, trying to overthrow it with violent means, even if such authority behaves in a blatantly ungodly way.

But as explained in the previous chapter, Paul also believed, as he clearly taught in Scripture, that it is Satan who rules this present evil world, and that it is ultimately God who allows Satan to rule temporarily. Paul taught that God might even directly appoint certain people to certain offices—in furtherance of His plan. These officials might actually be totally unqualified, from a godly perspective, to rule righteously and fairly. But this is not the reason why they were placed in power.

For instance, we read that God may appoint the “lowest of men” (Daniel 4:17). We read that He placed the stubborn Pharaoh of Egypt in power to magnify Himself in him (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17). He says that He will “send” a future king of Assyria against modern Israel and Judah to punish them (Isaiah 10:5–7). In that sense, they were or will be “God’s ministers,” in that they have been used—or will be used—to *carry out God’s plan and purpose*. God even called violent King Nebuchadnezzar “My servant” (Jeremiah 27:6), and He referred to idolatrous King Cyrus as “My shepherd” and “His anointed” (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), because they were fulfilling God’s Will in certain areas at that time.

The *New Scofield Reference Bible* states regarding Romans 13:1–4: “... the apostle points out that orderly government is part of God’s provision, even in a wicked world. No ruler exercises control except as God permits... Under *normal* circumstances the Christian is to be obedient to the law of the land. This does not mean that he is to obey regulations that are immoral or anti-Christian. In such cases it is his duty to

obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29; cp. Dan. 3:16–18; 6:10 ff..).”

The *Life Application Bible* sets forth the different ways in which “Christians” have tried to interpret the statements in Romans 13:1–4. Today, many are using similar arguments to justify, for example, *voting* in governmental elections.

The above-mentioned commentary writes:

“We should never allow government to force us to disobey God. Jesus and his apostles never disobeyed the government for personal reasons; when they disobeyed, it was in order to follow their higher loyalty to God. Their disobedience was not cheap; they were threatened, beaten, thrown into jail, tortured, and executed for their convictions. Like them, if we are compelled to disobey, we must be ready to accept the consequences.”

We are to submit to human laws and governments. When we must disobey for conscience sake and are being convicted for it, we must not resort to the use of guns and weapons, attempting to violently fight the officials who are being sent to us to carry out any sentence which might have been imposed against us.

The commentary continues:

“Christians understand Romans 13 in different ways. All Christians agree that we are to live at peace with the state as long as the state allows us to live by our religious convictions...

“Some Christians believe that the state is so corrupt that Christians should have as little to do with it as possible. Although they should be good citizens as long as they can do so without compromising their beliefs, they should not work for the government, vote in elections, or serve in the military.”

We would, overall, agree with this view point, at least as it concerns *voting* in governmental elections or *serving in the military in a combatant capacity*, or working for the government in respect to certain tasks, like the production of weapons to be used in war. This is not to say that a Christian could not work for the government by fulfilling non-violent tasks which would not compromise his beliefs.

The commentary goes on to state:

“Others believe that God has given the state authority in certain areas and the church authority in others. Christians can be loyal to both and can work for either. They should not, however, confuse the

the observance of the Sabbath, not of Sunday. But, like *Martin Luther*, the father of the Protestant Reformation, he was unwilling to go back to Sabbath worship.

The woman that rides the beast has been around for a long time, and has blatantly changed what God Himself sanctified. In the process, God’s annual Holy Days were discarded and pagan holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, were adopted. God specifically warned ancient Israel *not to incorporate pagan elements in their worship* of Him. He says in Deuteronomy 12:30–32, “Take heed to yourself... that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I will also do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it, you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” The same warning is for us today!

*Sunday* was the day on which pagans worshiped their sun god since ancient times. That is where the name Sunday comes from. *Easter* was a feast of fertility for the goddess Astarte, also called Ishtar, Ostara or Eostre. *Christmas* was the holy day of Mithras, of Attis, and of other pagan gods. Remarkably, many pagan “saviors” were supposedly born on December 25, killed on a Friday, and resurrected on a Sunday during Easter time.

Christ Himself was not born in December, nor killed on a Friday nor resurrected on a Sunday. Rather, Scripture indicates, with the support of history, that He was born in early autumn, before the rainy season. He could not have been born later than that because shepherds were still in the fields with their sheep. Records confirm that He was crucified on Wednesday and resurrected on Saturday, just before sunset, thereby fulfilling the only sign He gave—that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40).

The *Christmas tree* is a relic of pagan tree worship, which is condemned in Jeremiah 10:3: “For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold, they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.”

The early Roman Church absorbed pagan elements into their worship, in direct contradiction to God’s command not to do so, to make

what has gone on before in the Roman Empire and its revivals. Notice what historian Will Durant says in *The Age of Faith*, volume 4 of his renowned work, *The Story of Civilization*, about the Code of Justinian: “This Code, like the Theodosian, enacted orthodox Christianity into law. It began by declaring for the Trinity.... It acknowledged the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Church, and *ordered all Christian groups to submit to her authority*.... Relapsed heretics were to be put to death... and other dissenters were to suffer *confiscation of their goods*, and were declared *incompetent to buy or sell*, to inherit or bequeath; they were excluded from public office, *forbidden to meet*, and disqualified from suing orthodox Christians for debt” (1950, p. 112).

In addition, the Catholic Church decreed in 364 A.D. that Christians must work on the Sabbath, and that they ought to rest on Sunday. Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea stated the following:

“Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day [Sunday]; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.”

In A.D. 597, Pope Gregory I labeled those who insist on the observance of the Sabbath as teachers of Antichrist: “It has come to my ears that certain men of perverse spirit have sown among you some things that are wrong and opposed to the holy faith, so as to forbid any work being done on the Sabbath day. What else can I call these but preachers of Antichrist...”

Those who were not orthodox Catholics were forbidden from buying and selling—conducting business. Thus, the mark of the beast includes general participation in the worship system of the revived Roman Empire. Those who refused and are refusing to accept the mark were and will be persecuted by the government.

In Revelation 20:4, John says, “Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Theologians and commentators alike know that Sabbath observance is biblical, and that Sunday observance was instituted without biblical authority. *Swiss reformer John Calvin* admitted that the Bible teaches

two. In this view, church and state are concerned with two different spheres—the spiritual and the physical—and they complement each other but do not work together.”

Again, these statements contain elements of truth, but Christians should not confuse God’s authority with man’s authority. They must not be working for the state in capacities which would violate the letter or the spirit of God’s laws.

However, many Christians misinterpret Paul’s statement in Romans 13 in the way the aforementioned commentary describes in regard to a third category as follows:

“Still others believe that Christians have a responsibility to *make the state better*. They can do this politically, by electing Christian or high-principled leaders. They can also do this morally, by serving as an influence for good in society. In this view, church and state ideally work together for the good of all.”

Of course, it is true that as true Christians, we are to be good examples for others to show them how one can represent God and His Way of Life. But this does not mean that we should try to make this a better world or that we should attempt to better the state—it is Satan’s world which we cannot improve—or that we should vote for “high-principled leaders.”

Since a true Christian must disobey laws that are immoral or anti-Christian, how can he then support and vote for a political candidate who promotes and enacts such laws? The answer is, he cannot. He cannot vote for a lesser evil, but he must “abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Christ’s true disciples are to come out of this world and be separate, and not to touch what is unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17; compare Revelation 18:4; John 15:19; 17:16; 18:36). Also, Paul is asking in 2 Corinthians 6:14: “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?” To think naively that we can change this evil world through the election of professing Christian political candidates misunderstands the purpose of our Christian calling, and reflects a misunderstanding of life’s realities. After all, evil company in the political field corrupts even the most “high-principled” candidates (compare 1 Corinthians 15:33).

The commentary concludes with this accurate assessment:

“None of these views advocate rebelling against or refusing to obey the government’s laws or regulations unless those laws clearly require you to *violate the moral standards* revealed by God. Wherever we find ourselves, we must be responsible citizens, as well as *responsible Christians*.”

When speaking of Paul’s phraseology of “God’s ministers” (twice in verse 4), the commentary of Blunt, *“The Annotated Bible,”* states:

“Literally, ‘the deacon of God,’ meaning obviously, in this case, the delegated agent by whom the authority of the Divine Ruler is administered and enforced. This is the only place in the New Testament where the phrase is not used in its ecclesiastical sense... ‘for good’ being the object for which God has instituted governmental and judicial authority...”

God is against anarchy. At the same time, the present ruler of this world—Satan the devil—will be replaced by Jesus Christ when He returns to this earth. In the meantime, for the sake of God’s plan and His people, rulers of this world can be influenced by God to carry out His purposes and to do good for His true servants, and they can thereby become, at least temporarily, God’s “tools” or “servants” or “ministers.”

The commentary also points out that the words “God’s ministers” in verse 6 are *different* from the words in verse 4 and describe “an officer engaged in the civil service of the state. It is not elsewhere used in a secular sense in the New Testament.”

Romans 13:1–6 does not teach that Christians can or should get involved in political campaigns or that they should vote in governmental elections. This is clearly prohibited in the Bible, as we will see.

In addition, the *Catholic Church Extension Society* in Chicago published the following statement by Peter R. Kraemer, a Catholic priest: “We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living church, the authority of the church, as a rule to guide us.... We accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws.... It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible.”

Regarding the mark of the beast, the commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* states that, “The mark may be, as in the case of the sealing of the saints in the forehead, not a visible mark, but *symbolical of allegiance*. So the sign of the cross in Popery. The Pope’s interdict has often shut out the excommunicate from social and commercial intercourse. Under the final Antichrist [the beast] this shall come to pass in its most violent form.”

In addition to the rejection of the weekly Sabbath, the mark of the beast includes, among other things, the rejection of God’s annual Holy Days [which are also called Sabbaths in the Bible, compare Leviticus 23], while enforcing the celebration of man’s pagan holidays.

Simply put, the mark of the beast is tantamount to a political and religious philosophy detrimental to the true worship of God. It includes the mandatory and legally enforced celebration of pagan religious holidays, such as Sunday, Christmas and Easter, and the rejection of God’s weekly and annual Holy Days, including the weekly Saturday-Sabbath and, for instance, the Feast of Tabernacles. It also includes humanly devised and ungodly ideas such as fighting in war or supporting and embracing a religion which preaches a false Jesus or a false gospel (Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Corinthians 11:3–4).

It is important that we come out of the modern “Babylonian” system of religious and political confusion (Revelation 18:4). Modern “Babylon” includes the many false religious teachings of the fallen woman in Revelation 17 (compare verse 5)—the “second” beast—in conjunction with the many false political, military and economic concepts and activities of the “first” beast (Revelation 18:9, 11–14).

The mark comes from the first beast. But the second beast causes all people to accept this mark. We can get a clue about its character from

## Chapter 5

### When Are Governmental Officials Established as “God’s Ministers?”

This mark of the first beast includes the violation of God’s commandment to observe the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days (compare Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:20; Isaiah 56:2; Isaiah 58:13; Amos 8:5; Exodus 16:23, 26; Exodus 31:15). In the Bible, the “right hand” is associated with work (Psalm 90:17; 137:5). The “forehead” is the seat of thoughts (Ezekiel 3:8; 9:4; Revelation 7:3).

Christ told us that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27); and Paul adds in Hebrews 4:9 that “It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the sabbath” (*Lamsa Translation*).

We are told that the “little horn”—a reference to the Roman Catholic Church—would try to “change times and law” (Daniel 7:25), that is, God’s Law regarding holy time. The Roman Church changed the calendar in Europe in 1976, which identifies Sunday as the last day of the week, rather than the 7th-Day Saturday-Sabbath. It commands that Christians are to rest on Sunday, and it did command in the past that they were to work on Saturday. We will experience something similar very soon.

The “image” will influence the first beast—the final European revival of the ancient Roman Empire—to enjoin people to work on the Sabbath, while prohibiting to work on Sunday. As in the past, it will thereby “cause” the death of true Christians (compare Revelation 13:15).

God warns us not to worship the beast and his image, and not to receive his mark on our forehead and on our hand (Revelation 14:9). If we do, we will “drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation” (Revelation 14:10).

That the Catholic Church (the little horn) “changed” God’s Law regarding holy time is even admitted by the Catholic Church itself. Archbishop James Cardinal Gibbons wrote in 1893 in the *Catholic Mirror*: “The Catholic church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her Divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.... The Protestant world at its birth found the Christian Sabbath [Sunday] too strongly entrenched to run counter to its existence; it was therefore placed under the necessity of acquiescing in the arrangement, thus implying the [Catholic] Church’s right to change the day, for over 300 years. The Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is therefore to this day the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church...”

The question may arise then as to *when* human authority is established in God’s eyes; in other words, when do *successful rebels* constitute such authority which we must be subject to?

The commentary of Blunt, “*The Annotated Bible*,” addresses this issue in the following manner:

“... ‘be subject unto’ [as it is stated in Romans 13:1]: This word... means literally, ‘to range oneself *under*,’ and is opposed to the word rendered ‘resisteth’... which means, ‘to range oneself *against* in battle array.’ The one indicates loyalty on the part of citizens of a country to the sovereign authority of that country, the other indicates rebellion against it.

“... even when kings and their subordinates seem to be acting most independently [from God], they are but exercising so much power as they are *permitted* to exercise, working out within appointed limits such results as are in accordance with the general plan and purpose of God.

“... if we could see history mapped out before us, we should know how even the wars and misgovernments of the world are permitted... and not left to run their course without any control from above. Thus the cruel wars and tyrannical conquests out of which the universal empire of Rome grew [as well as its subsequent ten revivals in Europe] was a preparation of the [coming] universal kingdom of God...”

This brings up the thorny issue of rebellion against and assassination of wicked rulers. Even though humanly understandable, it must be said that the Bible does not support the killing of an evil ruler through subjects and citizens, however noble the motives might be. To give an example of history, the attempts to assassinate Adolf Hitler or the killing of Muammar Gaddafi would not be justified by biblical injunctions. (Of course, a true Christian is not to participate in any violent action against others in the first place, including in war.)

Even more to the point, when does a movement of rebels cease to be against constituted government?

The commentary continues:

“The independence of the great American republic was constitutionally acknowledged by the sovereign to whom it had previously been subject; the emperor Napoleon seated himself upon a throne which had been practically vacated before he came upon the scene of strife... But it is evident that a willing submission to successful rebels cannot be a duty until that success is established ... by the practical extinction of opposition on the part of those against whom the rebellion has been raised.”

Both in the case of the American Revolution and Napoleon’s usurpation of the throne, godly providence can clearly be seen in action, based on biblical prophecies which had to be fulfilled. A good example of wrongful submission to a rebel would be the uprising of Absalom against his father, King David. Even though King David fled temporarily from Jerusalem, he was still the godly-ordained and established king, and any loyalty to Absalom against David would have been misplaced. At the same time, we must realize that Absalom’s uprising was in direct consequence of David’s sins of adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah, and thus constituted God’s punishment (compare 2 Samuel 12:9–12).

We must also realize that God will sometimes use rebellious uprisings to displace an evil ruler. However, this fact does not justify actively supporting such uprisings or voting for rebels, nor would it justify voting for the evil king whom God wants to replace. **The Christian role is to be one of an observer, ambassador and announcer, not one of a participant.**

Note, for example, the violent and rebellious uprising, pursuant to God’s Will, in 1 Kings 11:9–11, 26–40; 12:1–24. However, the rebels led by Solomon’s servant Jeroboam against King Solomon and Solomon’s son, King Rehoboam, were in no way more righteous than the ones against whom they rebelled. In fact, when Jeroboam became king over the House of Israel (while Rehoboam remained king over the House of Judah), he instituted idolatry and, according to many records, abolished the observance of the Sabbath and replaced it with Sunday worship.

## Chapter 9

### What Is the Mark of the Beast?

In Revelation 13, we read about two “beasts.” The first “beast” (Revelation 13:1–10) is a *political, economic and military power* and describes the ancient Roman Empire and its ten European revivals. The second beast is introduced in Revelation 13:11 and describes a *religious power*. But they also describe the *individuals*, especially at the time of the last European revival, who will be leading the European power bloc. They are referred to as the “beast” as well, and also as the “false prophet.”

This second beast had two horns. It looked like a lamb (Jesus Christ is referred to as the Lamb of God throughout the New Testament, compare John 1:29 and Revelation 5:6), but it spoke like a dragon (Satan is identified as a dragon in Revelation 12:3, 9). This second beast is influenced by Satan, while pretending to speak and teach “religious doctrines” on behalf of Christ.

We read in Revelation 13:14 that the second beast will make an “image” to the first beast (the Roman Empire and its ten revivals). This passage began to find its fulfillment, historically, when the religious power of the second beast patterned itself after—made an image of—the governmental and political structure of the worldly power—the first beast—when it became a state in Rome, called the Vatican State, which would make contracts or treaties with other worldly governments; which also would send out their ambassadors and emissaries; and which would even have an army, including the Swiss guards that fought against “heretics” under the leadership of the Pope. It ultimately influenced and “inspired” the first beast to put to death those who would not worship and follow the dictates of the Catholic Church.

Revelation 13:16–17 explains that “the image” of the second (religious) beast will cause people to accept “a mark” of the first beast “on their right hand” or “on their foreheads.” Without it, they cannot buy or sell (compare Revelation 14:9).

governmental elections, participation in *jury duty*, and finally *joining the military* and *fighting in war*. In most cases, since they were unwilling to repent, many ceased to be members of the Body of Christ.

In addition, it must be said that even in the context of illegal actions by duly constituted governments or rebels, a true Christian is to avoid resorting to violence, as Christ explains in Matthew 5:38–41. (This is not to say that Christians cannot resort to legal non-violent means to defend against illegal conduct, nor, that they cannot flee, under certain circumstances, when confronted with unjust punishment. This will be discussed below.)

In Matthew 5:41, when encouraging His followers to go the “extra mile,” Jesus referred to the Roman practice that “obliged the people not only to furnish horses and carriages [for government dispatches], but to give personal attendance, often at great inconvenience, when required. But the thing here demanded is a readiness to submit to *unreasonable demands* [by governmental officials] of whatever kind, rather than raise quarrels, with all the evils resulting from them” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible*).

It must be admitted that Paul’s statements in Romans 13:1–7 belong to some of his sayings which “are hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16), and predictably, some “untaught and unstable people” have twisted them “to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (same verse). But it is clear what Paul is NOT saying:

He is NOT saying that we should participate in violent rebellions against constituted government. Nor is he saying that we should obey human governments in matters which are against God’s laws. He is most certainly not saying that true Christians should participate in political campaigns and vote for any of the political candidates.

Those who conclude the opposite and become engaged with and entangled in the affairs of this world are twisting Paul’s words to their own disappointment and destruction. Rather than concentrating on the physical affairs of this present evil age, which will soon pass away, they should concentrate on God’s Kingdom and do everything in their power and ability to “hasten” the coming of the Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:12).

2 Kings 6:14–23, and lasting peace was the result. When we are confronted with aggression, we need to pray to God to give us strength not to violate His Law by killing the aggressors. God will not allow that we are overtaken by a temptation that is too difficult for us to handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). If there is an opportunity, we can hide or escape from our enemies, as Christ did (John 10:39).

Christ never fought in war, nor did He ever commit violence against any man. When He drove out the money changers, Christ only used the whip for the animals, not the people. Correctly translated, John 2:15 should read: “When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, BOTH (not “with”) the sheep and the oxen...” (Compare *New International Version*; *New Revised Standard Version*; *Moffat Bible*).

As Christ never resorted to violence, neither did the early apostles and disciples after their conversion; and neither must we today.

God promises us protection from our enemies when we do what He commands (Exodus 34:22–24). If God were to choose not to protect us in any given situation, for whatever reason, we must still not violate His Law by killing another human being. Rather, we must act as Daniel’s three friends did, when Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:14–18).

Since God has ordered us, not to kill (Exodus 20:13), we must not violate His Law by taking the life of another human being (including through abortion). It is also remarkable that before the time of Constantine, no Church leader approved of Christian participation in war. Soldiers willing to kill, as well as gladiators and executioners, were refused Church membership.

We could therefore not kill in war, nor enter the military to serve as combatants. We would be able to fulfill any duties as a civil servant, if so required.

The *Worldwide Church of God* under its late human leader, Herbert W. Armstrong, who died in 1986, and the *Church of the Eternal God* and its corporate affiliates have consistently taught their members that it is wrong to participate in military service, as explained above, and to fight in war. It is a sad testimony that when a Church organization began to deviate from the Truth and the faith which was and is once and for all delivered to the saints, they began to allow *voting* in



(Luke 9:54–56). Christ told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that therefore, His servants would not fight (John 18:36). Paul confirmed that Christ’s followers are not to fight (2 Corinthians 10:3–4; Ephesians 6:12). We find that Satan is the one deceiving man to fight in war (Revelation 20:7–10).

It is true that in Old Testament times, ancient Israel fought in war. This, however, was sin. God never intended that Israel should fight. Israel chose to fight, lacking faith that God could and would help them in times of need (Exodus 17:7; Psalm 78:41). Since man is a free moral agent, God does not force man not to sin. God had made it clear, however, that Israel was not to fight. He told Israel in Exodus 14:14: “The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” God intended to bring Israel into the Promised Land by driving out the enemies, using hornets in several cases (Exodus 23:27–28; Deuteronomy 7:17–22; Joshua 24:12). When Israel relied on God, God fought for them, and they did not have to fight (2 Chronicles 20:1–30; 2 Chronicles 32:1–23).

David also fought in war, but this, too, was sinful. God punished David with wars because of his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:9–10). God did not allow David to build a temple, because he had shed blood in war (1 Chronicles 22:6–10; 1 Chronicles 28:2–3; 1 Kings 5:2–5). God punished David again at the end of his life, when he numbered his army, intending to go to war or to defend himself in war (2 Samuel 24:1–17; 1 Chronicles 21:1–30).

It is true that God, at times, ordered Israel to fight certain wars. This did not make war right. Israel had chosen to fight in war, as Israel later chose to have a king. God gave them their king (1 Samuel 8:22; 9:17), stating at the same time that their request for a king was sinful (1 Samuel 8:7, 19; 10:19; 12:13, 19–20). God allowed divorce in Old Testament times, because of the hardness of people’s hearts, but it was not God’s intent that people should divorce, barring certain biblical circumstances (Matthew 19:3–9). Since God’s purpose must stand, and since God had promised Abraham unconditionally to bring his descendants into the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18–21; 22:15–18), God determined the outcome of those wars that Israel wanted to fight.

Rather than killing our enemies, we are to do them good if it is within our power to do so. Elisha acted in that way, as recorded in

## Chapter 6

### Is It a Sin to Vote in Governmental Elections?

To be blunt, voting in governmental, national and presidential elections violates God’s plan for true Christians and constitutes a grave sin. It manifests the absence of faith in God; reveals a complete lack of understanding as to what the role of a true Christian is today; and shows utter ignorance as to who is ruling this world. FAR TOO MANY Christians are deceived and are deceiving others on this topic, foolishly thinking that they are serving God and their country by voting in governmental elections. This is true even for Christians who refuse to join the military and fight in war, but they think that it is alright to vote in presidential elections.

However, it is inconsistent to take the position that one cannot join the military because one is an ambassador of Jesus Christ and a citizen of another government—the Kingdom of God—while at the same time serving on a jury or voting in governmental elections. For instance, in the United States, the President is also the Commander-in-Chief, having both the right and the obligation under the Constitution, in certain circumstances, to declare war. How can one refuse to participate in war, while voting for a person who has the right and the obligation to declare war? In the past, people were disqualified as conscientious objectors because they did not refuse to serve on a jury or to vote in governmental elections. It was ruled that such an obvious inconsistency in position showed evidence for non-sincerity of the applicant.

As we pointed out above, it is SATAN who rules this world—EVERY country, WITHOUT exception. It is true, of course, that Satan can only do what God ALLOWS him to do, but generally speaking, God is NOT getting involved in the affairs of this world, and neither should we. God will ONLY intervene and see to it that certain individuals end up in governmental positions, if they are temporarily needed to fulfill

aspects of God's plan. But this would be GOD's doing, NOT ours.

A Christian is not to vote for a candidate in governmental elections because he understands the Truth about this being Satan's world at the present time. It is Satan who, with the general permission of God, places candidates into governmental offices. If we were to vote, we might involve ourselves quite directly in Satan's system. Hosea 8:4 gives us God's warning in this regard: "They set up kings, but not by Me; they made princes, but I did not acknowledge them."

Sometimes, in order to ensure that certain aspects of His plan are fulfilled, God Himself might intervene to see to it that the person best (or perhaps worst) suited for the job at that time gets the job. How would God look at us when He intervenes directly to place a specific person into office, while we did not vote for that person, but rather for someone whom God does not want to see in charge at that time? It is obvious that our vote would be found to be in opposition to God's Will.

To give a prophetic and an historical example, biblical prophecy reveals that a final political leader of the resurrected Roman Empire—the "beast"—will soon arise in Europe. According to God's prophetic plan, this person will be placed in office in the very last days, wreaking total havoc on this planet. It is *Satan*, with God's permission, who will give his power and authority to this person (Revelation 13:4–5). A Christian could not and should not vote for this person, of course, as he will persecute and kill many of the "saints" (Revelation 13:7), and he will even attempt to fight the returning Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:19).

Neither should a Christian have voted for *Adolf Hitler*, although it is clear now that Hitler came to power, as prophesied, to bring about the ninth resurrection of the Roman Empire. This is to say that God allowed Hitler to become ruler over Germany so that prophecy could be fulfilled.

The Bible shows that God sometimes appoints directly, or permits Satan to place into office, strong or weak leaders, depending on the situation, in order to ensure that God's purpose will be carried out.

For example, as mentioned before, God allowed ancient *Pharaoh*, at the time of the Exodus, to be ruler over Egypt. We read that God placed him into power because he was a stubborn, self-righteous and ungodly person who would refuse to obey God and do His Will.

## Chapter 8

### Is It Sin for a Christian to Join the Military and Fight in War?

As it is sinful behavior for a Christian to vote in governmental elections and to serve and judge on a jury, so it is indeed sin for a Christian to join the military service and participate in war.

Romans 12:17–21 tells us that we have to overcome evil with good; that we are not to avenge ourselves; and that we even have to give food and drink to our enemies if we find them in need. Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27–28 command us to love our enemies. This tells us that we cannot fight or kill our enemies. We are told, in Romans 14:19 and in 1 Peter 3:11, to pursue the things which lead to peace. We are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9; James 3:18).

John the Baptist told Roman soldiers to "do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14, *Authorized Version*). He was showing man how to live in peace (Luke 1:79). Jesus Christ came to preach peace (Acts 10:36), as man does not know the way to peace (Luke 19:41–42; Romans 3:17), living, instead, the way that brings about bloodshed and war (Romans 3:10–18). Christ will return to make an end to war (Psalm 46:9). He will scatter all those who delight in war (Psalm 68:28–30). After His return, all will learn how to live in peace, and there will be no more wars (Isaiah 2:2–4). Weapons of war will be destroyed (Hosea 2:18). At that time, there will be no end to the increase of peace (Isaiah 9:7). Today, as ambassadors of Christ, we are to proclaim peace and reject any kind of war (Isaiah 52:7).

We read in James 4:1–4 that wars originate with man's sinful and carnal desires, which must be overcome. We must live today the way of peace that all mankind will learn to live after Christ's return. Christ told Peter to put his sword away (Matthew 26:52). We are warned that all those who use the sword would perish by it (Revelation 13:10; compare 2 Samuel 2:26). Christ told His disciples that they were not following God's directive when they wanted to destroy their enemies

In following biblical injunctions, one could not convict a person, in any event, unless the accusation is supported by the testimony of *at least two witnesses* (Matthew 18:16; Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6–7; 19:15). These two witnesses would have to be subject to cross-examination. Since the witnesses would have to “cast the first stones,” circumstantial evidence [which is many times based on human interpretation and theory] would not be sufficient under God’s Law for the requirement of two witnesses.

Since we may be compelled, as a juror, to apply man’s laws in conflict with the Law of God, we could not take the oath as a juror, as we would, in principle, agree to obeying men rather than God (Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19). Therefore, jury duty will invariably create a conflict of conscience in an informed Christian between the requirements of God and the requirements of jury service. A Christian who violates his conscience would be guilty of committing sin (Romans 14:23; 1 John 3:4).

God announced to Moses that He was “sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand” (Exodus 3:19). Pharaoh would only yield after God had stricken Egypt with “all My wonders which I will do in its midst” (verse 20). God announced to Pharaoh that “indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth” (Exodus 9:16). Paul later quoted this passage in Romans 9:17 in the context of God’s Will and His decision as to whom He wants to grant mercy in this day and age.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 16:4 that “The LORD has made all FOR HIMSELF, Yes, even the WICKED for the day of doom.” The fact that GOD raised up and gave rulership to wicked Pharaoh for the day of his doom in order to show His mercy towards Israel PROVES that HUMAN voting for governmental leaders is useless, futile and CONTRARY TO GOD’S Will.

While the Jewish leadership was willing to fight the Babylonian army under King *Nebuchadnezzar*, the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed God’s Will to the Jewish people NOT to fight, but to put down their weapons and to surrender to the foreign king. Jeremiah did not find a popular acceptance of this command; in fact, he was labeled a traitor and imprisoned as a consequence. King Nebuchadnezzar conquered and subdued the House of Judah, as it had been prophesied, but he was by no means a righteous king. He was extremely violent and full of pride, and because of his arrogance and lack of humility, God removed him from his throne for seven years and let him become insane, living with the animals. After that, God restored his sanity and placed him back on his throne.

The accompanying lessons before, during and after Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity are strikingly revealed in the Bible. We read in Daniel 2:21 that God “removes kings and raises up kings.” We also read in Daniel 4:32; 5:21 that it is GOD who gives a kingdom to whomever HE chooses. God wants us to know that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever HE WILL, And sets over it the LOWEST of men” (Daniel 4:17). The *Authorized Version* even says that He “setteth up over it the BASEST of men.”

As mentioned, God will do so when His plan requires it; otherwise, He leaves it to Satan to appoint those whom he wants to rule this

world. Satan understands this. You will recall that he showed Jesus in the wilderness all THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD in a moment of time, and said to Him: "ALL this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to ME, and I give it to WHOMEVER I WISH" (Luke 4:5–6). Jesus knew this to be true, and we do not read that He disputed Satan's claim. This is simply NOT God's world, and neither is it the world of true Christians. Jesus said that the world hates us because we are not part of it (John 17:14). How FOOLISH to think that we should be a part of it by voting in governmental elections, believing that we can thereby make this world a better place or help our country in any way. How FOOLISH to think that we should be trying to improve Satan's handiwork.

We are afraid that this biblical warning will fall on deaf ears of those who in their misguided zeal are determined to vote, no matter what God says. They will do this at great personal peril, because God is not mocked; and what a man sows that he will also reap.

The Bible is very clear: We are SINNING if we vote in national elections, while forgetting our true responsibility of being AMBASSADORS for Christ and the coming Kingdom of God. Once God rules on earth, there will be NO MORE VOTING in political campaigns. For true Christians, there must be no voting today.

## Chapter 7

### Is It Sin for a Christian to Serve on a Jury?

As it is sinful behavior for a Christian to vote in governmental elections, so it is indeed sin for a Christian to serve on a jury.

A true Christian is a stranger, an alien and an exile (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13) while here on earth; an ambassador for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20); and a representative of God's Kingdom. As such, and in being a light to the world by proper conduct (Matthew 5:14–16), a true Christian does not take part in this world's governmental or political affairs, as presently, it is not God who rules this earth, but Satan the devil (Revelation 2:13; Luke 4:5–6). Christians are challenged to come out of the governmental and political systems of this world. Christ, knowing that God's Kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), refused to judge a civil matter when He was asked to do so (Luke 12:14). Paul, likewise, prohibited judging those "who are outside" the church (1 Corinthians 5:12).

Further, man's judgments are concerned with the letter of the law. In contrast, God looks on one's heart, and is concerned with the spirit and intent of the law. Man's laws usually do not take into account repentance, forgiveness of sins, and other spiritual factors in the way that God does (Acts 2:38). Jesus, in looking at the heart of the accused, refused to condemn a woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11). Jesus taught that true Christians must be willing to forgive others (Matthew 6:14–15).

Another principle against participation in jury duty is that true Christians are to learn to judge according to the Law of God as seasoned by judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). They are also to render "righteous" judgment (John 7:24). Presenting selective evidence, where facts may be suppressed for technical legal reasons as permitted in the courts, may not necessarily lead to godly justice, mercy and truth, and to the rendering of a righteous judgment.