

## **“BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW” SERIES**

### **#3: “The Good Christian Citizen”**

#### **INTRO:**

Before the Israelites were defeated by the Babylonians and many of them carried off to Babylon, where they lived for 400 years, they were a kingdom, an autonomous nation, living by laws that God had given them under leaders that God provided.

While they did return to their land and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple, they never really regained the autonomous status they once enjoyed. After the Babylonians came the Medo-Persians, then the Greeks, and finally the Romans. Israel was little more than a vassal state. They were not an independent country that could exercise their sovereignty. They had no supreme ruler; they were given a governor, and he wasn't even Jewish. Even Herod was Idumean. O how they longed for the days of King David!

God was going to restore the Davidic dynasty, but it would be restored as a spiritual kingdom. That's why Matthew's gospel account, aimed at the Jews, begins with a genealogy that shows that Jesus of Nazareth was from the lineage of David. As such, He had the proper credentials to be the promised king. However, those who saw Him as such were crushed when He was killed by the Romans, who had no king but Caesar. But God raised Him from the dead so that He could reign over His kingdom, which would be the church.

He reigns over that kingdom today and awaits the time when God the Father tells Him that it's time to bring that kingdom to the New Jerusalem.

The congregations of the church in today's world are like embassies in a foreign land. We who make up the church live here as ambassadors – ambassadors for Christ. That is, we represent Christ wherever we go. That's why it's so important that we conduct ourselves accordingly. No country (or kingdom) wants an ambassador who is an embarrassment.

You and I have what could be called “dual citizenship.” We are temporarily American citizens, and we are eternally citizens of God's kingdom. However, there should be no question as to where our first loyalties lie. We are, first and foremost, followers of King Jesus.

As far as our American citizenship goes, we are to be *salt* and *light*, so that we can spread God's terms of peace (the gospel message) to everyone. You see, Satan is the god of this world, and he has turned most of the people in this world against God. Our mission is one of reconciliation – leading people to be reconciled to God through His Son Jesus.

One way to do this, among others, is to be a good Christian citizen. In Philippians 1:27 Paul wrote: ***"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a many worthy of the gospel of Christ."*** Interestingly, the Greek word he used that is translated **"conduct"** is POLITEUO, the word from which our word "politics" comes. So, Paul says that our "citizenship" should reflect favorably on the gospel of Christ. Today I want to try to describe what a good Christian citizen is, on the basis of God's word.

First of all, a good Christian citizen...

***...DOES NOT COMPROMISE GOD'S CLEAR TEACHING IN SCRIPTURE.***

Among the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples were those recorded by Matthew in the last chapter of his gospel account: ***"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"*** (28:19-20).

The Christians of the first century lived among pagans and were, by and large, ruled by pagans. In his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul urged them to ***"...stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter"*** (2:15).

He wrote to the Christians at Ephesus, home of the great temple of the goddess Diana, ***"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist..."*** (6:14).

To the Christians at Colossae, he wrote: ***"...stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured"*** (4:12).

To the Christians at Corinth, who lived in a city known for its pagan beliefs and gross immorality, Paul wrote: ***"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain"*** 15:1-2).

When Peter and the other apostles were ordered to stop teaching about Jesus, they replied: **"We must obey God rather than men!"** (Acts 5:29).

Many of those early Christians died horrible deaths rather than give up or compromise their stand on what Christ and the apostles had taught. Whether or not they participated in affairs of governance (voting, running for office, etc.) is uncertain. It appears that they did not until, maybe, in the fourth century, when the powerful Roman Church emerged and became quite political. There are Christians today, like the Christadelphians, who do not vote nor participate in politics in any way.

In many places in today's world, Christians are suffering persecution rather than give up or compromise what they believe. Even in America today Christians are being pressured to compromise godly truths to be loyal to political parties.

May God give us the courage to stand firmly for biblical truth!

Second, a good Christian citizen...

**...HONORS AND RESPECTS AUTHORITY AND OBEYS THE LAW.**

The apostle Paul addresses this in Romans 13:1-7:

**"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.**

**"This is why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."**

It's important that we understand that Paul's words here are general principles. Jack Cottrell has these comments:

*"...if we take Paul to be referring here to individual governments and rulers, then we have no choice but to say that God has hand-picked and personally put into office every blood-thirsty tyrant, every genocidal dictator, every anti-Christian regime, every crooked politician and judge, every sadistic sheriff and police officer, and every immoral and bribe-taking public official who now exists, has ever existed, and ever will exist. Most take it exactly this way. . .*

*"In my opinion, this whole approach...is wrong. I do not believe Paul is referring here to individual governments and rulers at all, but rather to the various **forms** or **spheres** of authority which God has established, including governmental authority along with all the others. In fact, I suggest that vv. 1b-2 are a parenthesis in which Paul is asserting the general truth that **all** forms of authority have been established by God, and that rebellion against **any** of them is rebellion against God himself and deserves his condemnation. In other words, vv. 1b-2 express the general principle, of which v. 1a is a specific application" (The College Press NIV Commentary, Romans, Volume 2, pp. 359-360).*

The historical record reveals that mankind has not done too well in submitting himself to the authority of God, so through the Scriptures He has ordained certain authority-submission relationships and delegated limited authority. Among these are:

1. Man is to be in submission to Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:3, 10; Ephesians 5:23);
2. Women are to be submissive to men in the church (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11; 14:34-35; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2);
3. A wife is to be in submission to her husband (Ephesians 5:21-24; Colossians 3:8; Titus 2:5; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:1, 5,6);
4. Children are to be submissive to their parents (Luke 2:51; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3);
5. Congregations are to be submissive to their elders (Hebrews 13:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:5);
6. Slaves are to be in submission to their masters (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:20; Titus 2:9; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:18); and another one might be:

7. Soldiers are to be submissive to their commanders (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:4).

Ideally, it's God's will that a Christian be a law-abiding, authority-respecting citizen, but while human government is ordained of God, not every law is ordained of God. When the laws of human government conflict with the will of God, a Christian citizen will work to get such laws repealed or changed.

Third, a good Christian citizen...

***...PRAYS FOR THOSE WHO GOVERN.***

The apostle Paul urged in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to Timothy "***that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness***" (2:1-2).

Now, does this mean that Timothy and the other first century Christians were to pray for Caesar, the Roman Senate and their governor? Yes! So, does this mean that we should pray for our president, our senators and representatives, our governor and the P.O.A. Board of Directors? Yes!

Fourth, a good Christian citizen...

***...VIEWS ALL ISSUES, WHETHER MORAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS, THROUGH GOD'S EYES.***

In other words, a good Christian has a biblical worldview.

What are the issues of our day?

(Audience participation)

What should govern our view of these issues? I believe we should examine each one in light of biblical principles. For the good Christian citizen, an issue cannot be culturally or socially right if it's biblically wrong.

Fifth, a good Christian citizen...

***...DOES THE BEST HE OR SHE CAN TO INFLUENCE SOCIETY TOWARD GODLINESS.***

How do we do this? By becoming an activist? Can we do it in the voting booth? Maybe so. However, I think Jesus had a better idea: "**You**

***are the salt of the earth. . . You are the light of the world. . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:13-16).

Furthermore, He taught something we call “The Beatitudes” (Matthew 5:2-11) which describe “shining” Christians:

1. They have totally surrendered to God (5:3);
2. They mourn those who suffer (5:4);
3. They are spiritually strong in resisting worldly wisdom (5:5);
4. Their goal is the righteousness of God (5:6);
5. They are merciful (5:7);
6. They are pure in heart (5:8);
7. They are peacemakers (5:9);
8. They’re willing to suffer, if need be, for the faith (5:10).

**CONCLUSION:**

May each of us strive to be good Christian citizens – ambassadors for Christ that God can be proud of – that can influence our nation to turn back to God.