

Civic Responsibility

In a world out of step with the Bible, how far should a True Worshiper go - or not go - in becoming involved in the "system"? We live under the influence of an increasingly evil and satanic world. We as followers of the Bible dislike much of what goes on around us.

The government is pledged to aid the weakest or smallest elements of society to ensure that democratic principles and individual rights are upheld. These rights and principles then become the standard imposed upon the rest, who must learn to adjust. Here are some examples: Prayer or references to the Bible in public schools are prohibited; work on the Sabbath is often mandated, and by gaining governmental acceptance of immoral lifestyles, certain groups are gradually forcing the public into condoning behavior the Bible soundly condemns. Activities of anti-religious groups are carefully guarded by the courts, which uphold their freedom and rights.

What Is the Believer's Role?

At times we may sympathize and even empathize with many who are demonstrating for the homeless or women's rights or against abortions, against wage cut-backs, crime, unfairness, and a host of causes. Yet, should a believer in the Bible get involved in social causes?

We in the United States and other democracies have a right to protest. So, should we spend our time attempting to change the downward plunge of our society? Is it our job to change the world? What does Scripture say?

The question is not whether abortion is wrong. It is wrong. The question is not whether alcohol can cause drunken driving leading to death. It can. The question is not whether practices protested are wrong according to the Bible. They may be. Neither is the question whether protests ultimately accomplish their goals either pro or con. They likely have an effect. The question is, are the devoted followers of our Savior openly to challenge societal evils and join public rallies in opposition?

The more we study the Bible the more we can see that the ills of society are brought on by simple disobedience to Yahweh. This *cause* is what we need to combat not the effects.

Ruler of This Present World

Luke 4:6 reveals that Satan was willing to give Yahshua all the power of the world if He would but fall down and worship him, adding that this power was his to give. Note that Yahshua did not say it wasn't. It WAS within Satan's purview! The Savior said to His followers, "*Now this is the judgment of this world; now shall the PRINCE OF THIS WORLD be cast out.*" John 12:31.

Our Redeemer readily acknowledged that the Adversary has usurped control of this world that he is in charge of society. He did not confront Satan, even though He had a golden opportunity as the devil challenged Yahshua's integrity.

Yahshua at another time acknowledged, "*Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the PRINCE OF THIS WORLD comes, and has nothing in Me.*" John 14:30.

Paul tells the Christian believers that Satan is in charge of this world, "*In whom the ruler of this world had blinded the minds of them which believe not...*" 2Corinthians 4:4. Paul was quite aware of the present attitudes of this evil world, saying, "*Wherein in time past you walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.*" Ephesians 2:2. In verse 6:12, Paul refers to our struggle as being against "*the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*"

We are reminded in 1John 5:19, "*We are of Yahweh, and the whole world lies in wickedness.*" Clearly, the Bible teaches that our present society is evil and dominated by Satan and his demons. Yahweh allows the devil to have his way for now. He is not openly opposing Satan yet. The question is, should we?

Paul goes on to say that everyone is to be "*subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of Yahweh. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of Yahweh; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil...*" Romans 13:1-3

Peter also advises us to obey the rulers of the world. In fact he says we are to "*submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for Yahweh's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors as those sent by him...*" 1Peter 2:13-17.

There is no example or even encouragement for a believer to rise up and rebel against the government. We are to be law-abiding citizens so that we can pursue righteous living as an example to the world. As a matter of fact, Yahshua upheld the civil rulers of this world and by His example, showed that we are to pay our taxes and obey the law of the land.

Wickedness Is Not Yet Full

Yahweh allows pleasure-mad people to continue their wicked ways, giving them time to see their mistakes, change their lives, and repent. He is very patient, much more than either you or I. Finally, He will move in to set things right and will then rescue His people.

This is expected to occur at the end of the age. Man will continue his downward degradation until conditions become thoroughly corrupt, Daniel 8:23. The prophesied "man of sin" will be epitome of rebellion against Yahweh and His righteousness.

There is a veiled prophecy of this given to Abraham who was told in Genesis 15:16 that his seed would not come out of Egypt until the fourth generation, for "*the wickedness of the Amorite is not yet full.*"

Egypt is a type of the world, and Yahweh's people will not be redeemed until the wickedness of the worldly is total. The future fulfillment of this dual prophecy is for the time ahead of us. Wickedness will continue to increase and become so vile that there seems to be no way out.

The Amorites lived in Canaan, and when their sins reached to heaven, Israel was brought out from Egypt and given the mission to replace the Amorites. Remember that Yahweh is still on the throne. He allows certain events, but in the final analysis, He is in complete charge and is working out His plan of redemption in His own time.

Governments Are of Babylon

We are often reminded that all governments are bad and that we as followers of Yahweh should not cooperate with them in any way lest we take up the mark of the beast. As time goes by, we will be more aware of the coming "Beast System" and will be alerted to the deception that will be foisted on many. But nowhere are we told to RESIST the government of this world. In fact, we are told just the opposite!

Some of the greatest men of the Bible actually took an active part in helping a pagan king rule his realm. Joseph was second in command of Egypt in Pharaoh's court. He served Pharaoh and the Egyptians well, bringing them through the seven-year famine.

We recall the account of Daniel and his three friends who were active in government, ruling under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Because of their integrity, wisdom, and ability, they had the respect of the king and his people, and were in the grace of Almighty Yahweh. They

were never condemned because of their position in government. But by the same token, they kept faithful to Yahweh in all they did.

Nehemiah, cupbearer to the King of Persia, used his office to further the return of Judah to their homeland and to begin the reconstruction of Jerusalem.

Being employed in the governments of this world is not opposed in Biblical teachings, there is always the peril of being influenced to do what is opposed to Yahweh's Word there, as anywhere else. Daniel is a good example.

Yahweh Sets Up Kings

Daniel served the king of Babylon as the second in command, carrying out his official duties without contesting the authority of Nebuchadnezzar in ruling out Babylon. It was only when Daniel and his companions were ordered to bow down to the king's image in disobedience to Yahweh's Third Commandment that Daniel refused. Furthermore, Daniel pointed out that Yahweh had placed Nebuchadnezzar in charge of his realm. We read in Daniel 4:17, "*...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives them to whomsoever He will, and set up over it the basest of men.*"

It may seem rather strange that Daniel would recognize that it was Yahweh who gave the pagan Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom. (See also 2:21; 4:25; 4:32). Why, this king was responsible for carrying Judah into Babylonian captivity!

Love Not the World

It is simply not the calling of a True Worshiper to make this world a better place in which to live. We are warned that we should "*love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,*" 1John 2:15. By trying to reform the world we could end up loving it more than Yahweh, of spending more of our energy and resources on improving it than in proclaiming Bible truth!

There is no Biblical example that our Savior or any of the Apostles marched against or resisted the Roman government, nor did they refuse payment of unfair taxes.

Yahshua Our Example

Nothing is given in the Word of Yahweh to encourage us to march in demonstrations or openly oppose the laws of the land no matter how unfair. Neither should we resist any governmental decree unless it goes against our following of Scripture.

Our behavior should present us as law-abiding citizens. By opposing the authority of our government, we oppose the power of Yahweh, Romans 13:2, and we could well give the impressions that we are defiant of ALL law and authority.

We do not find the Savior taking issue with the Roman government of His day. To be sure He did find fault with the religious leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees. "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto Elohim the things which be Elohim's,*" directed Yahshua in Matthew 22:21. He showed that we must obey civil laws where they do not contradict the laws of Yahweh, to pay our taxes, not fight taxation. There is no record that Yahshua ever confronted the Romans rulers.

Peter chides the contentious: "*Especially those who, following the promptings of their lower nature, indulge their polluting passions and despise all control. Audacious and self-willed, they feel no awe of the mighty, maligning them, even where angels, though excelling them in strength*"

and power, do not bring against them a malignant charge before Yahweh," 2Peter 2:10-11, TCNT.

Jude 8 condemns the same attitude of those who defile the flesh, despise dominion (government, authority) and speak evil of dignities (majesty).

Peter clearly emphasizes that we are by our good works and proper behavior to earn the respect of the unbeliever. Neither are we to use our liberty to do wrong. Weymouth says, "*Be free men, and yet do not make your freedom a screen for base conduct,*" 1Peter 2:16.

The early believers displayed great faith in Yahweh's sustaining power. With nothing more than their personal and primitive efforts (as compared with today's printing press, VCR's, films, photo's, Bibles, mail, phones, high-speed travel) they turned the world upside down, Acts 17:6.

In tribute to their reputable integrity and lawful obedience, an anonymous letter was written about early believers to Diognetus about 150 C.E.: "*...not distinguished from the rest of mankind by country, by speech nor by customs. They live in their own homelands but as sojourners; they share all things as citizens, and suffer all things as aliens. Every foreign country is their homeland and every homeland a foreign country...They obey the established laws, and surpass the laws in their own lives. They are put to death and are made alive. They are poor but make many rich. They lack all things yet abound in all things. They are abused and give blessing; they are insulted and give honor. When they do good they are punished as evildoers; when they are punished, they rejoice as those receiving life.*" (From Christian History Institute).

Captives of Society

Just as Israelites were slaves of Egyptian bondage, we today are also slaves of a Babylonian society. Abraham was told the Israelites would not be redeemed until the wickedness of the Amorites was full.

The same situation is alluded to in Daniel 8:23, a time just ahead of us. Notice: "*And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up.*"

Shortly, a fierce and demanding king will arise. This is likely the same ruler spoken of in Revelation 13!

It is not our task to oppose rulers like this man of sin. Our task is not to change the present world to a world of righteousness. We are not trying to usher in the Kingdom now. That will be Yahshua's job when He returns. Our goal is to change the hearts and minds of people so they will voluntarily lead a right way of life that leads to a far better eternal life.

Let the world go its way. Although we must be in the world, we are not to be a part of its ways. If we choose to battle the world's governments and society in general, we may well work against Yahweh's grand plan to allow man to continue his deteriorating plunge into sin and wickedness.

Society will come to the point it can never retrieve itself from the morass. It will have no choice but to rely totally on Almighty Yahweh. When it is clear to man that Yahweh's higher wisdom and guidance can be the only salvation for this planet, then Yahweh will intervene.

If we choose to interfere in this world and through confrontation restrain the forces of evil, we could well be opposing Yahweh's plan. We could be setting back His timetable by interfering. The message of Scripture is that we are to judge those within the Body, while Yahweh will judge those outside of it, 1Corinthians 5:12.

While busy protesting or rebelling against the world's ways that only Yahweh can change, we take from precious Bible study time that prepares for our position in the Kingdom. Paul said we must redeem the time, for the days are evil, Ephesians 5:16.

It is not easy to stand by and see wickedness all around us. But if we convert the person, the evil will automatically stop. Individual hearts must be reformed before collective behavior changes.

The Beast System

There are those who feel strong about not possessing a social security card or number. Rest assured the card or its number by itself is not the mark of the Beast!

The Beast system will use much of our modern technology to enforce its programs. But refusing to use computers, social security numbers, zip codes, UPC labels or Medicare will neither protect one from the persecution of the Beast system nor aid its arrival. It's what's in your heart and mind that really matters.

Man is being given the time and opportunity to rule himself. In spite of all his technology and worldly wisdom man is destined to fail.

Before the human creation utterly destroys itself, Yahweh will send His Son back to earth and establish the righteous Kingdom of the heavens. Pray that you will be a part of THAT government!

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