

The Christian and the State

The Christian who determines to obey the New Testament faces various questions about his relation to society and the state. What is the nature and function of the state? Should or can the state operate on the principles of New Testament ethics? If not, what part may the Christian have in politics and the government? Should the Christian vote in order to help put “good” men into office? These and related questions call for valid New Testament answers.

The Christian

Jesus “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4), but we still live in the midst of a sinful society. Though we are subject to civil powers, we have been delivered “from the power of darkness” and have been translated “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). Thus our first allegiance is to a higher power and authority than any earthly government. We are set apart from “this present evil world,” for “we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness . . . and we are in him [Christ]” (1 John 5:19, 20).

Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer, looked forward to His glory again with the Father (John 17:5). But about His disciples, Jesus said, “I am no more in the world, but these are in the world” (v. 11). He clarified their relationship to the world and to the Father by saying, “The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I

am not of the world. . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (vv. 14, 11).

Christians are twice-born people whose allegiance is to God, but we live in the midst of the "disobedient" (1 Peter 1:23; 2:8). Therefore we are a "holy nation . . . the people of God . . . strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:9-11).

The Nations

Even though all rulers are set into place by God (Romans 13:1), the nations and their governments do not operate on Christian principles. They never have. The writer of Daniel 7 portrays nations as ferocious beasts—lion, leopard, bear, and one described as “dreadful and terrible.” Throughout history, nations have risen up and fought each other and have dealt mercilessly with their enemies. Can followers of the Prince of Peace become a part of that kind of activity?

Beyond that, the nations of the world more often than not oppose the truth of God. This can be seen in the nations around Old Testament Israel. The same is true of nations since then. Jesus said, “Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9).

Thus, the nations of the world will come under God’s judgment. Isaiah wrote, “Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the

earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter” (Isaiah 34:1, 2). Revelation 19:11-21 describes the final overthrow of the nations. The King of kings will “smite the nations” and cast the rulers “into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (vv. 15, 20). Satan is the one who deceives the nations (Revelation 20:3). Shall we not rather choose to be a part of the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Revelation 19:7)?