

## Why Christians Should Vote

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Democratically elected representatives and officials make decisions that have a tremendous impact upon our lives. They have the power to pass laws, impose rules, regulations and taxes and appoint judges. Their decisions can either shape civil government after the divine model that is revealed in Scripture (Romans 13:1-10), or they can shape it after the model of the “sea beast” and the “great whore” of the Apocalypse – an intrusive, abusive and invasive government that was both anti-God and anti-man (Revelation 13, 17, 18). Considering how much power politicians have to affect our lives, either for the better or for the worse, it behooves us to do all that we can to elect honorable ones. In a democracy, the voting booth is where one makes his strongest statement.

### Two Models of Government

The Bible describes two models of government: one that is “ordained” of God, and one that is of the Devil. The *divine model* of government operates in the best interests of the governed (Romans 13:1-10; 1 Peter 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2). Its legislators make decisions and pass laws that are consistent with the great biblical principles contained in the second commandment [the “**Royal Law**” – James 2:8] and the **Golden Rule**: *loving one’s neighbor as oneself* (doing him no harm) and *treating others as one wishes to be treated* (Romans 13:9, 10; Matthew 7:12).

The divine model of government promotes and preserves the peace, safety and security of its citizens. It provides an atmosphere in which citizens “*may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty*” (1 Tim. 2:2). It cultivates a climate of personal responsibility in which people are free to “*do honest work with [their] own hands*” (Ephesians 4:28) and pursue their own ambitions as Paul instructed the Thessalonians: “*Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and to attend to your own business and work with your hands...*” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). According to James 4:13, it is a government that provides for **free market capitalism** – an environment in which people are free to make their own decisions about *where* they do business (“such and such a city”), *how much time* they spend at that business (“continue there a year”), *how they do business* (“buy and sell”), and as a result of their efforts, “**make a profit.**” As clearly illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), the form of economy advocated in the Bible is capitalism, not socialism or communism.

The other is *Satan's model* of government. It is characterized by *self-interest* and the attainment of *power, control* and *wealth*. It is this model that is being followed when legislators make decisions and pass laws that serve only to empower and enrich themselves and their cronies. Rather than *punish evil people*, as done by God-ordained government (1 Peter 2:14), such governments excuse, and even reward evildoers. Rather than praise, protect and support good and responsible people (ibid), this model of government actually punishes them! This is usually done through punitive levels of taxation, but history repeatedly demonstrates that it is often done by persecution and even slaughter.

It is important to note that both Bible and secular history show that either model can be pursued regardless of the *type* of government, whether a *monarchy, democracy* or *oligarchy*. For example, the books of the kings describe some of the Jewish kings as doing what was "right," and others as doing what was "wrong." Solomon described the ideal king: "*A king who sits on the throne of justice scatters away all evil with his eyes*" (Proverbs 20:8). Regardless of the type of government, or kind of governmental officials [kings, governors or elected representatives], Christians should support those who will work for the divine model of government.

**Understanding the difference between these two models of government makes the Bible student the best voter.** His vote is cast, not on the basis of a candidate's appearance or charisma, but upon the basis of bedrock biblical principles. He knows that "*righteousness exalts a nation*" and that "*sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). He knows that "*the throne is established in righteousness*" (Prov. 16:12; 25:5).

Some wrongly conclude that referencing such Old Testament Scriptures constitutes a call for a *theocracy*. While it is true that Solomon lived and wrote under a theocratic form of government [God was the true King of Israel], "*righteousness*" does not "*exalt a nation*" *only in a theocracy*. "*Righteousness*" involves the right treatment of others, and can be practiced in any type of government, and in any age or country. While discussing *civil government* (Romans 13:1-10), Paul said, "*The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up on this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*" *Love does no wrong to a neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*" (Romans 13:9, 10). Paul here identifies the fundamental purpose and operating principle of a God-ordained government: God's model for civil government is one that **protects people from being wronged by others**. The reality is that, "*not all men have faith,*" as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. There are "*wicked and*

*evil men*” who wish to exploit, harm and *wrong* others (2 Thessalonians 3:2). The divine model of government provides a mechanism for dealing with evil people. Personifying civil authority, Paul wrote, “*For he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer*” (Romans 13:4). The job of government is to provide a peaceful atmosphere in which people may “heartily” do whatever they put their hands to doing (Col. 3:23; 1 Tim. 2:2).

Those who properly understand these passages and principles understand the need to cast votes for candidates who appreciate this *limited role* that God has prescribed for civil government. Incidentally, there is a reason why the U.S. Constitution provides for a *limited government* with *enumerated powers*: It was composed by Bible students who understood the biblical principles that I have expressed in this article.

### **The Christian’s Vote and Moral Issues**

We often have the opportunity to cast votes for candidates who are *pro-life* [anti-abortion] and *pro-marriage/pro-family* [anti-gay marriage]. Some openly oppose taxpayer funded abortion and embryonic stem cell research, which Christians also oppose. Occasionally, a candidate will run on an anti-welfare platform, advocating for policies that are consistent with Paul’s instructions that, “*If a man won’t work, neither should he eat*” (2 Thess. 3:10). The voting booth gives us an opportunity to elect people who will make laws that are more consistent with our biblical worldview.

### **Taxes**

Godless governments often use tax money to fund immoral, ungodly and unethical practices, as noted above. No Christian wants his tax dollars funding the abominable practice of abortion. No Christian wants to fund the farming of fetuses for medical experimentation, as is done by some embryonic stem cell researchers. We would do well to support candidates who refuse to fund such godless activities with our money.

Along with not wanting his tax dollars to fund sinful programs and practices, the Christian also knows that excessive taxation prevents him from being able to meet his God-given responsibilities towards his *family*, *church* and *neighbor*. Taxation becomes punitive, confiscatory and wrong when the tax levels reach a point where people aren’t able to meet their God-given responsibilities.

The Bible tells us what is proper when it comes to paying taxes. Paul said, “*For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God,*

*attending to this very thing*" (Romans 13:6). What "very thing?" We answered this question when we earlier examined verses 3 and 4: Taxes are to fund civil authorities for the purpose of *protecting those who do what is right* and for *punishing those who do what is wrong*. Notice that Paul described civil authorities as existing for our *good*. This necessarily involves the implementation of policies and laws that provide for the equal treatment of all people. The Bible teaches that it is wrong to show partiality in the treatment of others (James 2:9). Providing "equal opportunity" and a "level playing field" is no mere political sound bite: It is actually a part of God's design for civil government.

2010 US legislators have wasted billions of taxpayer dollars with their so-called "stimulus act." Most of this money has been spent doing nothing close to what is authorized in Romans 13. Christians should support political candidates who understand the concept of limited taxation, and who refuse to support wasteful spending.

### **Conclusion**

Religious people make a terrible mistake when they leave the selection of public officials to atheists and humanists. Government can work effectively only when it is ordered after the divine model, and it is Bible students who understand that model. They also understand that men are known "*by their fruits*" (Matthew 7:16), and that accurate judging is done, not on the basis of "*outward appearance*," but upon the basis of a *righteous standard* (John 7:24). This combination makes the Christian/Bible student the best voter.

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