

Thinking Biblically About Governmental Authority

Matthew 22:17-21

Romans 13:1-5

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”

*But Jesus, aware of their malice, said,
“Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?
Show me the coin for the tax.”*

And they brought him a denarius.

*And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and
inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar's.”*

Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”

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“With this single sentence our Lord established the validity of human government, while at the same time setting its limits.”

– Kent Hughes

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ 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 servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. (Romans 13:1-5)

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A. The authority of government has been established by God (vv.1-2).

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resists what God has appointed (2a).*

“To be sure, men will abuse and misuse the institution of the State just as man, because of sin, has abused and misused every other institution in history including the Church of Jesus Christ. But this does not mean that the institution is bad or that it should be forsaken.

It simply means that men are sinners and rebels in God's world, and this is the way they behave with good institutions. As a matter of fact, it is because of this very sin that there must be human government to maintain order . . . until the final and ultimate rule of Jesus Christ is established.”

– Richard Halverson

We must obey God rather than men.
(Acts 5:29)

I. God calls us to submit to governmental authority.

A. The authority of government has been established by God (vv.1-2).

B. The ministry of government has been assigned by God (vv.3-5).

For he is God's servant for your good (v.4a).

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For the authorities are ministers of God (v.6b).

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The word translated *sword* here is used in several other places in the NT to describe a sword used to kill people - Acts 12:2; 16:27; Hebrews 11:37; Revelation 13:10.

God intends for government to be His
*avenger who carries out God's wrath on the
wrongdoer (v.4).*

II. God calls us to conscientiously obey governmental authority (v.5b).

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. (v.5)

“I think we need to go back to the fundamentals. There is nothing more powerful than the individual believer sold out to Christ and committed to his own family, her own neighborhood, his own school, and one’s own environment.

If enough people catch this, which is really the message of the first century church, then the possibility of revival, our real national need, will be increased.”

- Cal Thomas