

Ten Reasons Why Romans 13 is Not About Secular Government, Part 10

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7/18/2016

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (Romans 13:1-7)¹

Reason #9

The Government Depicted by the Apostle Paul is *Due* Tribute, Custom, Fear, and Honor

For he is the minister of God to thee for good ... a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.... For *for this cause* pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is *due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (Romans 13:4-7)

The Greek word *opheile* translated "dues" involves a debt *owed* to another party. Many government officials *demand* tribute and custom. This does not mean it's *due* them.

Honor to whom honor is due

Any government due tribute and custom would also be due fear (reverence) and honor. To owe any one of these is to owe them all. To think honor is due any and all governments that levy taxes on its subjects is preposterous. For example, America's Constitutional Republic uses a portion of the taxes it confiscates to subsidize in utero infanticide² and sodomy. Are we to believe Paul intends such a government to be honored?

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to every man according to his deeds*: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (Romans 2:5-8, NASB)

How much more so those who inflict unrighteousness upon others by edict?

He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to Yahweh.³ (Proverbs 17:15)

What Solomon describes is the inevitable corollary of governments not based upon Yahweh's perfect law of liberty. As such, they are not *due* the things enumerated by Paul.

If God honors those known for their good deeds and renders wrath upon those who are known for their evil deeds,

why would He command us to render honor, etc., upon governments that render evil to the righteous? This would include governments that promote and finance infanticide, sodomy, transgenderism, etc., or that simply refuse to fear and honor Yahweh as sovereign? Is honor and reverence, etc., due such despots? Does God expect *us* to render honor and reverence to those to whom *He* will render wrath and indignation?

Paul's statement "for this cause" eliminates anyone who is not *due* tribute, custom, fear, and honor. He explicitly declares these things are owed the authorities he describes *because* they are [doing good to the righteous](#) and [restraining the wicked](#)—not just randomly, but [continually](#). This is what enjoins Christians to render them tribute, custom, fear, and honor.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:7-10)

The immediate context following Romans 13:1-7 concerns our responsibility to the Second Greatest Commandment—*thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself*. The Second cannot be severed from the Greatest Commandment—*thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*. And yet those who teach Romans 13 is about secular government—government that's severed itself from God—would have us believe this is the government promoted by Paul. Does the context not mean anything?

In Verse 5, Paul declares [Holy Spirit conviction](#) as the motivation for submission to the government he describes. In Verses 8-10, he declares Yahweh's law of love as our motivation for paying what's due such a government. Does love obligate us to render tribute, custom, fear, and honor to a government that has repudiated God and His law? Does love obligate us to render these things to a government that assists in murdering some of the most vulnerable of its citizens? If not, then Paul's depiction has nothing to do with secular government established upon fickle finite man's surrogate edicts, governed by biblically seditious powers.

Someone may insist government is to be honored *only* when it's honorable. *Indeed!* This alone eliminates secular government from Romans 13. Romans 13:1-2 applies *only* to biblical governments because only governments established upon Yahweh's sovereignty and law are continually honorable.

Tribute to whom tribute is due

Puritan Pastor Jonathan Mayhew delineated between God's ministers and mere powers:

Here [in Romans 13:7] the apostle argues the duty of paying taxes from this consideration, that those who perform the duty of rulers are continually attending upon the public welfare. But how does this argument conclude for paying taxes to such princes as are continually endeavoring to ruin the public, and especially when such payment would facilitate and promote this wicked design.⁴

Paul delineates God-ordained authorities as ministers of God who continually serve Yahweh. It is relatively easy to find biblical precedent in both Old and New Testaments for what Romans 13 prescribes as due authorities that represent God:

[T]hou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto Yahweh thy God with *a tribute* of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto Yahweh thy God, according as Yahweh thy God hath blessed thee. (Deuteronomy 16:10)

Kingdom laborers are to be supported with tithes and freewill offerings. King Hezekiah understood that such men were due support:

Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion [firstfruits, increase, and the tithe, Verse 5] of the priests and the Levites [who often served as judges], that they might be encouraged in [devote themselves to, NASB] the law of Yahweh. (2 Chronicles 31:4)

When Paul wrote “for this cause” we are to pay tribute, he was referring to biblical taxes (tithes and freewill offerings) for the upkeep of God’s ministers:

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? ... For it is written in the law of Moses [in Deuteronomy 25:4], Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.... [H]e that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal [material, NASB] things? If others be partakers of this power [*exousia*, authority] over you, are not we rather? ... Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel [of the kingdom, Matthew 24:14] should live of the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:7-14)

God’s law ordains that men such as Paul and Barnabas—God-established authorities and ministers of God—are due monetary considerations:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of [and therefore due] his reward. (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

The Greek word *time*, translated “honor” in the phrase “double honor,” is the same word translated “honor” in Romans 13:7 in the phrase “honor to whom honor is due.” In these last two passages, Paul is referring to elders, God-ordained authorities, servants of God, kingdom laborers like those appointed as judges by Moses and like the priest Ezra who served as a judge:

And thou [Moses] shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers.... And let them judge the people at all seasons.... (Exodus 18:20-22)

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of Yahweh, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. (Ezra 7:10)

Such representatives of *God are due* tribute, etc.

Fear to whom fear is due

Not only is the fear of Yahweh the beginning of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding,⁵ it’s the leading statute of the First Commandment:

[T]hese are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them ... all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. ... *Thou shalt fear Yahweh thy God*.... Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you [gods who are nothing more than images **representing the people** themselves performing their own will by edict].... And *Yahweh commanded us ... to fear Yahweh our God*, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive.... (Deuteronomy 6:1-24)

“Thou shalt have no other gods before [Yahweh]” relies first upon “Thou shall not fear anyone but Yahweh” and those who represent Him. For example, parents are not only to be loved, honored, and obeyed, they are also to be feared:

Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them.... Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father.... (Leviticus 19:1,3)

Does the same hold true for someone who has usurped a father's God-given authority over his children?

Godly parents are to be feared/revered *because* they are God-ordained representatives of Yahweh. The same is true for God-ordained civil authorities. To render fear, or godly reverence, to government that has repudiated Yahweh as its sovereign is not only counter to what Paul is teaching in Romans 13, it is a violation of the First Commandment.

The government Paul depicts in Romans 13 is not secular but a biblical civil body politic whose laborers are *due* tribute, custom, fear, and honor.

Rendering to Nebuchadnezzar

During King Nebuchadnezzar's reign over Babylon, some of the Judahites were required to submit to God's judgment *for their failure to maintain godly government under Yahweh*, as recorded in the book of Jeremiah. This submission included turning themselves over to Babylonian captivity for seventy years, per Jeremiah 27:4-11. Those who submitted are identified as "the good figs." Some people therefore maintain this establishes biblical precedent for submission to whatever secular government is in power at any given time.

While this was required of the Judahites at the time Jeremiah prophesied, nowhere is it recorded they were required *by God* to render unconditional tribute, custom, reverence, or honor to Nebuchadnezzar, as Romans 13 instructs us to render to God's faithful ministers.

The Babylonian captivity was the consequence of the Judahites' rejection of Yahweh, His kingdom, and its legislation. Consequently, to teach Romans 13 demands perpetual submission (including fear, honor, and financial support) to secular governments rather than the establishment of biblical governments, puts us under God's perpetual judgment.

Not *everyone* was required to go to Babylon. In Jeremiah 39:10-11 and 40:1-6, when Jeremiah was given the choice by Nebuchadnezzar to go to Babylon or stay in the land of Judah, he chose the latter. Jeremiah also instructs others to remain in land of Judah rather than go to Babylon. Was Jeremiah a bad fig? Of course, not.

Those who employ Jeremiah 27:4-11 as historical precedent, do not account for the remnant (including Jeremiah) left in the land to establish a society of, by, and for God based upon His law (Chapters 39-44) . In other words, unless Jeremiah and the remnant were bad figs, Jeremiah 27:4-11 didn't pertain to the remnant left to continue on under God's law and cannot be used as precedent for His remnant today.

Unlike Jeremiah 27:4-11, Romans 13 was not written to the bulk of disobedient Israelites. It was written to the law-abiding remnant—those who didn't require a Nebuchadnezzar to punish their disobedience.

Rendering to Caesar

Invariably, someone will object that Jesus declared we're to render to Caesar what is Caesar's. This is especially relevant since both Romans 13 and Mark 12 use the word "render":

And ... certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, [said unto Jesus in order] to catch him in his words. ... Master, ... Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.* And they marvelled at him. (Mark 12:13-17)

If the statement “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” is to be taken at face value, there would be little reason for Christ’s antagonists to marvel at His response. Furthermore, if the common interpretation is correct, Jesus would be a thief were He to use what belonged to Caesar for His kingdom—a kingdom opposed to Caesar’s, per Acts 17:6-7.

If we’re to correctly interpret Jesus’ response, we must not overlook that He was responding to the Pharisees and Herodians who intended to entrap Him with their question. One might therefore expect Jesus’ response to be similar to other incidents in which He turned the tables on people with disingenuous motives, ensnaring them with their own words.

Caesar: A Flesh and Blood Roman Dictator

Today, the term “Caesar” is often used to represent government in general. However, at the time Christ made this statement, Caesar was a flesh and blood Roman dictator. Therefore to correctly discern Jesus’ response, we must ask ourselves: What exactly belonged to Caesar that *didn’t belong to God*? Did the bodies, souls, and spirits of man belong to Caesar? Did the people’s lands and other possessions belong to this Roman Emperor? Did reverence, honor, and obedience belong to this tyrant?

Caesar, of course, would have insisted all these things belonged exclusively to him. However, we’re concerned with Caesar’s due, *not* merely what he laid claim to.

What about taxes? Romans 13:7 informs us to “render ... to all their dues, tribute (tax, NASB) to whom tribute is due.” In Verse 6, Paul indicated all of these things are due to *God’s ministers*. Did Caesar qualify as one of the servants of God depicted by Paul in Verses 3 and 4—a terror to the wicked and a blessing to the righteous? Even people who maintain Romans 13 is about secular government are averse to identifying Caesar as one of God’s ministers. *Why*? Because Caesar was precisely the opposite.

These questions are extremely important because Caesar’s disposition is crucial in determining what was due him. The Ahabs, Jezebels, and Caesars of this world *should* get what is due them. But are such powers due what Paul listed in Romans 13, or are they due something else altogether? It’s a safe bet Jason and his Christian brethren did not believe Caesar was due the things enumerated by Paul:

[L]ewd fellows of the baser sort ... drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city [intending to incriminate them], crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ... and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another King, one Jesus. (Acts 17:5-7)

It’s unfathomable Paul vindicated Caesar by teaching Christians were obligated to honor him.

Biblical taxes

The government described by Paul is a [biblical government](#),⁶ established upon [God’s moral laws](#).⁷ Therefore, the taxes Paul declares are due to God’s ministers—judges and other kingdom laborers—are biblical taxes for the maintenance of kingdom affairs. Are we to believe Jesus and Paul were suggesting Christians are obligated to pay kingdom taxes—tithes and offerings—to Caesar who strove to destroy the kingdom of God and murdered kingdom laborers?

What belongs to God, and what belongs to Caesar? The answer to the first question answers the second question. Yahweh is sovereign and reigns over and owns *everything*:

The earth is Yahweh’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1)

What does this leave for Caesar? *Even Caesar didn’t belong to Caesar.*

Trapping the Trappers

Jesus' retort to the scheming Pharisees and Herodians was merely another example of His trapping them with their own words. In this instance, He was forcing them to choose their God—Yahweh or Caesar—much the same as Elijah with the double-minded Israelites on Mt. Carmel:

How long halt ye between two opinions? If Yahweh be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. (1 Kings 18:21)

When interpreted correctly, Romans 13:1-4 proves that, apart from areas where his law agreed with Yahweh's law, Caesar was not a legitimate authority *except* over those like the Pharisees and Herodians who chose him above God:

When Pilate ... brought Jesus forth ... he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? *The chief priest answered, We have no king but Caesar.* Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified.... (John 19:13-16)

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" was never meant to be instruction to everyone, but only to those who *forsake* God's authority.

There is no precedent in Yahweh's law for the things enumerated by Paul being due secular government. Neither does Jesus' "render to Caesar" declaration demonstrate secular government in Romans 13. It does precisely the opposite.

Stay tuned for [Part 11](#).

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1. [Christian Duty Under Corrupt Government: A Revolutionary Commentary on Roams 13:1-7](#)

2. The battle against this atrocity begins with identifying it correctly. By calling it "abortion," we've acquiesced to the opposition's terminology. Look up "abortion" and "miscarriage" in any dictionary. A miscarriage is an abortion. What doctors (and parents) do to infants in the womb is infanticide. Had *Roe v. Wade* been waged over infanticide rather than abortion, it would have never made it to a court room. In fact, by employing the word "abortion," *Roe v. Wade* was won before it ever got to court.

The Greek word *brephos* employed in the New Testament for infants already born is the same word used for infants in the womb (Luke 2:12 and Luke 1:41), without specifying the precise moment they became a *brephos*. Therefore, our only option is to then accept that they became such at conception. Thus, intentionally killing a *brephos* at any point is "brephocide" or, more properly, infanticide.

3. YHWH, the English transliteration of the Tetragrammaton, is most often pronounced Yahweh. It is the principal Hebrew name of the God of the Bible and was inspired to appear nearly 7,000 times in the Old Testament. It was unlawfully deleted by the English translators. In obedience to the Third Commandment and the many Scriptures that charge us to proclaim, swear by, praise, extol, call upon, bless, glorify, and hold fast to His name, we have chosen to memorialize His name here in this document and in our lives. For a more thorough explanation concerning

important reasons for using the sacred name of God, see [“The Third Commandment.”](#)

4. Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,” quoted by John Wingate Thornton, *The Pulpit of the American Revolution: Political Sermons of the Period of 1776* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1970) p. 77.

5. Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10.

6. [A Biblical Constitution: A Scriptural Replacement for Secular Government](#)

See also series of ten online books on each of the Ten Commandments and their respective statutes, and judgments, beginning with [Thou shalt have no other gods before me](#).

7. [Law and Kingdom: Their Relevance Under the New Covenant](#)