

Ten Reasons Why Romans 13 is Not About Secular Government, Part 4

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5/3/2016

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 #3

The God-Ordained Authorities Are Identified as Ministers of God

Not only does the Apostle Paul identify the rulers he's writing about in Romans 13 as [authorities rather than powers](#), he further identifies them as ministers (servants) of God. In fact, he does so not once, not twice, but three times in four verses.

It's important to note that the term "minister(s) of God" is used only two other times in the New Testament:

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in afflictions, in necessities, [and in] distresses.... (2 Corinthians 6:4)

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we ... sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

Whenever Paul uses "minister of God," he's explicitly referencing kingdom laborers, such as Timothy and himself.

All rulers are ministers of God, *conditionally*

Someone is likely to protest that Paul's use of "minister of God" applies to all rulers because Yahweh has used even despots such as Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar for His purposes. Because all rulers are determined by Yahweh (per Daniel 2:21* [**[H]e removeth kings, and setteth up kings...." (Daniel 2:21)]), they are all His servants, doing His bidding for whatever purpose He has designed.

While it is true Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar, for example, was depicted as God's servant, this does *not* automatically equate him with the caliber of men depicted in Romans 13:1-6—those who continually do good to the righteous and execute God's wrath upon the evil. Men like Nebuchadnezzar can be described as servants of God only in the broadest sense of the term.

Nebuchadnezzar did Yahweh's bidding and was thus Yahweh's servant *in that bidding*. However, Yahweh's sovereignty in using even the worst of men for His purposes has no bearing on Paul's intention with the phrase

“minister of God” in Romans 13. This is apparent in Verses 3 and 4, in which Paul is *explicit* regarding the type of civil rulers to whom he’s referring.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.... 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. (Romans 13:3-4)

Even Judas was God’s servant, but he certainly did not continually do good to the righteous and execute wrath upon the unrighteous.

Except for a few exceptions in the Old Testament, the term “minister of God” is used almost exclusively to depict those whom we would naturally think of when reading the term: Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Old Testament, and Paul, Timothy, and other kingdom laborers in the New Testament.

Isaiah prophesied the priests of Yahweh would serve as ministers of God during the New Covenant:

[Y]e shall be named the Priests of Yahweh: men shall call you the Ministers of our God.... (Isaiah 61:6)

The ministers of God in Romans 13 are a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

Ministers of the gospel of the kingdom

Someone might also protest that the ministers of God in 2 Corinthians 6:4 and 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (cited earlier) are ministers of the gospel, not civil leaders. But is this necessarily true? Could there be more to the gospel and more to God’s ministers than is commonly understood? There is certainly more to *ekklesia* (poorly translated “church”) than is normally recognized. *Ekklesia* is principally a political term that represents the entire life of a Christian community (including government of the themselves and, at times, others), not just what takes place inside the four walls of contemporary church buildings.

When people hear the word “gospel,” they usually think of the gospel of Christ or the gospel of salvation. Praise God, it’s first and foremost both of these. However, the gospel encompasses *much more* than what is initially accomplished in salvation. It’s also depicted as “the gospel of the kingdom” in Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 24:14, and Mark 1:14.

If it is the gospel of the kingdom, it must also be the gospel of the King’s law—as depicted by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:

But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murders of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; *according to the glorious gospel* of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

The King’s law in the hands of the King’s men

Unlike many contemporary Christians’ view of our Sovereign’s law, Paul identifies the law of Yahweh as “good.” *How could it be otherwise?* God’s law reflects His righteousness and is the principle means of establishing His will on earth in our personal lives, families, assemblies, and society. Christ’s blood-atoning sacrifice and resurrection is God’s means for *imputing* His righteousness to the *remnant*. Yahweh’s moral law is His means of *establishing* His righteous will *on earth*.³

When added to Paul’s witness in Romans 7, 1 Timothy 1:8 is the fifth time Paul declares Yahweh’s law is good:

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good ... which is good ... which is good.... For we know that the law is spiritual ... I consent unto the law that it is good. (Romans 7:12-16)

Paul was merely reiterating what had been previously acknowledged by Nehemiah and King David:

Thou [Yahweh] camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments. (Nehemiah 9:13)

The law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19:7-9)

As can be seen from the foregoing, *all* of God's triune moral law is good—His commandments, statutes, and civil judgments. Every viable, dynamic law is composed of these three integral components.⁴ Consequently, to identify any one of the three components as good is to automatically include the other two components as good as well.

To eliminate any one of these three components is to cripple the law. The Ten Commandments are explained by their respective statutes. The Commandments and statutes are enforced by their respective judgments. (*We cannot sever the judgments from the rest of the moral law, as many alleged theologians are tragically inclined to do without turning the commandments and statutes into merely good advice.*)

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul is specifically addressing the biblical civil sanctions used to either punish convicted criminals or to deter would-be criminals. Paul identifies these civil sanctions as good. In Romans 13, he identifies good government under the authority of God's ministers as a terror to the wicked. This is accomplished with Yahweh's altogether righteous civil sanctions.

Who is most likely to lawfully employ Yahweh's civil judgments for the good of the populace: God-established unrighteous powers or God-ordained righteous authorities?

Judah's King Jehoshaphat understood the judges he appointed would judge on God's behalf, and he warned them of their responsibility to uphold His laws:

And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for *ye judge not for man, but for Yahweh*, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of Yahweh be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with Yahweh our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. (2 Chronicles 19:5-7)

Moses likewise warned his appointees their judgments were to be the judgments of Yahweh:

And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; *for the judgment is God's*.... (Deuteronomy 1:16-17)

If the judges' determinations had been based on the arbitrary ethics of man and not on Yahweh's laws, their judgments would not have been His. As such, these judges could hardly be described as ministers of God who are a blessing to society.

The civil sanctions Paul identifies as part of the gospel of the kingdom actually *are* for the righteous man—that is, elders (like Paul and Timothy), some of whom are called to be judges in a Christian civil body politic. Such judges would be described as ministers of God for good. To identify anyone else with the same terminology is to force upon Romans 13 what is found nowhere else in the Bible.

Yahweh's good judgments

Not everyone today agrees with Paul that Yahweh's civil judgments are good. But how much better are Yahweh's

civil sanctions in the hands of godly authorities than the capricious judgments of the unrighteous, who are best described in Isaiah 5:20 as those who “call evil good, and good evil”? Verse 24 explains this is because such men “cast away the law of Yahweh of hosts,” including His civil judgments.

There are no vacuums when it comes to law. Anyone not promoting Yahweh’s civil sanctions are defaulting to man’s fickle judgments. They are defaulting to unrighteous men who impose unrighteous decrees.

That Yahweh intends for the judgments to be in the hands of His people is unmistakable:

Let ... a twoedged sword [be] in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye Yah. (Psalm 149:6-9)....

The two-edged sword is the same found in Romans 13:4, indicative of those with the *authority* to adjudicate according to Yahweh’s civil sanctions.

Definitive and progressive dominion

The kingdom, and with it godly government, was definitively given to the saints in the 1st century AD, as prophesied in Daniel 2 and 7:

And in the days of those kings [of the Roman Empire] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed ... it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. (Daniel 2:44)

But *the saints* of the most High shall *take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom* for ever, even for ever and ever.... Until the Ancient of days came, and *judgment* was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints *possessed* the kingdom.... And *the kingdom and dominion* ... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27)

This was *definitively* accomplished when Christians were given dominion of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:6, 2:38-41, etc.), and with it the imperative for legislating Yahweh’s righteousness, including His civil sanctions. Note the word “judgment” in Daniel 7:22.

Joel 2:17 declares, “O Yahweh ... give not thine heritage to reproach, that *the heathen should rule over them...*” God doesn’t want the heathen ruling over His heritage. In turn, this means He wants Christians ruling society over the heathen. This is ultimately even to the non-Christians’ benefit.

Did God fail when giving dominion to the saints? Or have saints predominantly failed God in not progressively pursuing the dominion He definitively provided us? The conventional interpretation of Romans 13 is a repudiation of the Christian dominion prophesied by both Daniel and Joel. Worse, it fosters more failure.

Christians’ aversion to Yahweh’s judgments is one of the prime reasons Christians have lost dominion. Whoever determines what constitutes crime and dispenses judgment clearly rule society.

Antinomians’ aversion to Yahweh’s judgments can only mean they believe man’s judgments are superior to Yahweh’s and that non-Christians are more competent to dispense judgment than Christians, which in turn means most modern Christians do not believe “...the judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:9). They also do not believe “the law of Yahweh is perfect” (Psalm 19:7) because any law void of its judgments is an imperfect law, lacking one third of its indispensable components. Abolishing a Commandment’s judgment guts the Commandment the judgment enforces.

People opposed to the Bible’s civil sanctions prefer crime over the deterrent effect of God’s judgments, criminals over victims, and man’s law—at least man’s judgments—over Yahweh’s. Put another way, these same people would

prefer people be murdered, kidnapped, raped, sodomized, and plundered rather than claim responsibility for administering Yahweh's righteous judgments:

The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. (Proverbs 21:7)

Despite most pronomians' strong belief in capital punishment, many ironically relinquish to the heathen the determination for what should and should not be capital offenses. History indicates their dereliction of duty may one day result in the deaths of their own children or grandchildren for proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior, as in the waning days of Rome's Caesars.⁵

God—ordained servants of God

Failing to distinguish between godly and ungodly governments is not only unbiblical, it is a recipe for disaster:

Therefore the law is slacked, and [righteous] judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about [surround, NASB] the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. (Habakkuk 1:4)

Paul's portrayal does not depict God-established powers, such as Nebuchadnezzar or Caesar, but instead God-ordained authorities. He is particularly talking about ministers of God—Christian judges administering Yahweh's civil sanctions on violators of God's law.

Stay tuned for [Part 5](#).

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

2. 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](#)."

3. For more on how Yahweh's moral law applies and should be implemented today, see [Law and Kingdom: Their Relevance Under the New Covenant](#).

See also [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](#).

4. "[T]hese are the *commandments, the statutes, and the judgments*, which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them...." (Deuteronomy 6:1)

5. [Chapter 17](#) “Amendment 8: Bail, Fines, and Cruel and Unusual Punishments” of *Bible Law vs. the United States Constitution: The Christian Perspective*.