

# Should Christians serve in the Military and Politics?

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*Debates have been raging back and forth about Christians in the military. Also, many ask "should Christians vote"? Does the church get involved in politics? What about defending one self and his family and property is this allowed for Christians?*

The position in the church of God for years has been to not get involved in politics. That a member of the church of God should not vote, or go into the military, is this true? The Bible says "Thou shalt not kill." Does this mean Israel was not allowed to defend itself in times of war? Israel did have an army. God said that Israel would be his "battle axe" against wicked nations. How does one reconcile the service of military and war with the Bible? Does it contradict? What about "turning the other cheek" as Christ taught. This booklet will attempt to filter out man's theories, and strictly cling to the Bible and what it says about all of these questions.

### Military Service

America has one of the greatest militaries the world has ever known. The military has done a lot of good throughout the world, one example, ending World War Two. Another is toppling evil dictators like Sadaam Hussein, Hitler and others.

In the Colonial days of America and Britain, they had militaries and were *very* Christian. They built these colonies based on the Bible and biblical principles. Were they wrong in having militaries? *We must realize that we owe our personal freedoms to the willingness of others to die in combat while fighting for our nation.* All the great men and women that fought for our freedoms we have today and are honored for their service (and rightly so), were they not following the teaching of Christ that says, "Greater love hath no man than this, *that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" (John 15:13)? Many soldiers have "laid down their lives" for their friends and countrymen during combat against evil nations and dictators. God gave military strength to His people Israel for that purpose, (see Micah 5:8) he called them, "Thou *art* my battle axe *and* weapons of war: **for with thee** will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;" (Jer 51:20). God's laws for military are *only* for defense and honorable causes, to fight any nation without just cause is condemned, (see Psalm 7:4; Psalm 35:1, 7-8.).

War is only used as a defense from unprovoked attack. (Exod. 17:8-16; 1 Sam. 30:1-18; 2 Sam. 5:17-25; 2 Sam. 10:1-9; 2 Sam. 21:15-22). Or against evil men who continually stir up war, see Psa. 140:1-2.

So what does the Bible say about military service?

While there are rare cases in the Old Testament when God "did all the fighting" for the Israelites-but this was due to the situation where the odds were impossible to get out of! Jesus said, "...but *with God* all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)- (as in the Exodus against Pharaoh's host). But God usually *required* his people to fight their enemies in warfare as it says in Jeremiah quoted above. God did exempt the Levites from military service as they were not included in a national census of men available for military service (Numbers 1).

Deuteronomy 20 lists God's laws for making war and for granting exemptions for military service. Notice in verse 1 that God did *not* say "if you go to war," but rather "*when* you go to

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war..." God expected the Israelites to fight their own battles and he blessed them with victory if they were obedient, as it says in Leviticus 26:8, "And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: *and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.*"

### Abraham

In the days of Abraham, may do not realize that Abraham was a "man of war." Abraham had the Holy Spirit of God and was converted. Genesis 14 shows as soon as he heard that his relative, Lot, was a captive, Abraham armed all his trained men and waged war on Lot's captors. The Bible does not record that God told Abraham to go to war nor does it indicate Abraham made any effort to consult God to see "if it was God's will" that he wage war. Abraham "walked with God" and *he already knew God's will enough to know that God would allow him to go to war under such circumstances.* In this case it was to save his nephew Lot.

Some will say: "Yes, but that was before the Holy Spirit was given to people, and these Old Testament saints were not converted, but rather carnal-minded people." Let's consider that argument

The fact that Abraham had sufficient weapons in his encampment to quickly arm 318 servants for war (Genesis 14:14) indicates that while Abraham had "faith in God," he also traveled with an arsenal of weapons! This was permitted by God for rulers to have weapons, "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." (Rom 13:4). Abraham was "a mighty prince among us:" (Gen 23:6). The word "prince" is "nâsi" (Strong's #5387), and it means, "properly an *exalted* one, that is, a *king* or *sheik*; also a rising *mist*: - captain, chief, cloud, governor, prince, ruler, vapour." (ibid).

Abraham saw no conflict between being "a man of faith," and also being "a man of war" when circumstances required him to be one. Abraham kept God's commandments (Gen 26:5). This is only done by the indwelling of the spirit of God in the individuals heart (Rom 5:5; 2 Corinth 3:3; 1 John 5:3).

Romans the 4th chapter describes Abraham's conversion, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (4:3). It also speaks of David (v.6) and his conversion, and that we also Jew or gentile, who "walk in the steps of that Faith" Abraham is their father also (v.12), and Paul was speaking to converted Christians. So Abraham had the spirit of God, was converted and Jesus said he will be in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28).

Hebrews 11, the "faith chapter," lists many of the Old Testament heroes who will be in the kingdom of God. Abraham, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah and David were all warriors who killed many men in combat. These giants of the faith saw no ethical or moral conflict between serving God and killing the enemies of their nations in combat. Did they have the Spirit of God? Of course! Were they "converted?" Yes.

The Holy Spirit of God has not changed. The same Holy Spirit which converted Old Testament heroes is the same Holy Spirit that works with converted people in New Testament times. It was

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God's Holy Spirit that moved Jephthah to go to war (Judges 11:29), and which enabled Samson, armed only with the jawbone of an ass, to kill 1000 Philistines in mortal combat (Judges 15:14-16). Even the prophets of God recognized no divine regulation against killing the enemies of God or Israel. Samuel the prophet personally killed (and even dismembered) King Agag the Amalekite after King Saul had refused to do so (1 Samuel 15). The prophet Elijah personally killed 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40)! The New Testament proclaims that David was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), and Psalm 51:11 confirms David had God's Spirit in him, but David was also a man who killed so many men in combat that one could hardly number them! What power enabled these biblical heroes to victoriously kill so many enemies of their nation? The Holy Spirit of God moved and energized them to do so! Since God "changes not," why couldn't the Holy Spirit energize modern warriors to do the same thing? If there are *enemies* "foreign" and "domestic" could not a Christian *soldier* defend his country? The Bible says YES!

### **The New Testament**

What of the New Testament? What about the New Testament's teachings? The Apostle Paul acknowledged in Romans 13:1-6 that nations have a right to wage war in self-defense by asserting that "rulers" have a right to "bear the sword" against evildoers. Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17-18 indicates that Old Testament laws and practices stay "in effect" during New Testament times. Given this statement of Jesus and the fact that God's people routinely fought in (and even led!) their national armies in Old Testament times, the burden of proof that modern Christians should refrain from military service lies entirely on the advocates of that viewpoint.

### **Thou shalt not Kill?**

Many tend to quote Exodus 20:13 that says, "Thou shalt not kill." The Hebrew word here for "kill" is "râtsach" (Strong's #7523) The sixth commandment actually states: "Do no murder" (Complete Jewish Bible). This commandment forbids *premeditated* murder, but it does not forbid using lethal force in self-defense. The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible states, "An unjustifiable killing or slaughter."

The Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew definitions says, "to murder; premeditated; assassinate."

Many of our soldiers fought and sacrificed for our country and its freedoms. If it wasn't for them our nations in the west would be subject to tyrants and dictators. Jesus Christ himself stated as noted above in John 15:13: "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" Jesus' statement is not limited to martyrdoms. *Many soldiers have "laid down their lives" for their friends and countrymen during combat as well! The intent of the act of war is what is to be justified.* Pre-meditated murder, and one defending the freedoms of a nation that is under threat are two totally *different intentions* indeed.

What of Jesus' teaching of "turn the other cheek"? (see Matthew 5:38-41; Luke 6:29). Jesus' comments were addressing relationships *among brethren*, and were never intended to address the issue of responding to an invading army. Here Jesus is speaking of *personal vengeance* from one brother to another. That only the government has the right to exact vengeance on someone who

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has wronged you (Read our article Did Jesus Abolish the Eye for an Eye law). In these statements, Jesus was not addressing the issue of whether the citizens of a sovereign nation could serve in the military.

Many of Jesus' pacifist-sounding comments were addressing relationships *among brethren*, and were never intended to address the issue of responding to an invading army. Remember, Israel was called the "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). In the Old Testament it says, "If thou meet *thine enemy's ox* or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

"If thou see the ass *of him that hateth thee* lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him" (Ex 23:4-5; see also Proverbs 25:21). This is consistent with Jesus teaching of "love your enemies." The context was *among brethren-fellow Israelites!* They were statements on how to *repair breaches among physical and spiritual brethren!* We have made the mistake of applying it to *enemy nations*, the standard of non-violence that Jesus told us to apply to our brethren! The Al Qaeda and Taliban (or any other foreign army) are *not* our "brethren," either physically or spiritually. They are like the enemies *nations* who attacked the Israelites in Old Testament examples, and the "men of faith" listed in Hebrews 11 all recognized a divinely given right to resist and slay such enemies.

Should Christians to support the President/Prime Minister in our nation's war on terrorism? I see no reason why his call should cause any controversy. Not only does Romans 13:4-6 affirm that rulers have the right to "bear the sword" against evildoers, but it also refers to them as "God's ministers" when they act in such a capacity. The President/Prime minister is exercising a divinely given right to defend our nation against the evildoers who attacked our nation and murdered thousands of our countrymen. We should support our President/Prime Minister and our armed forces in this war on terrorism! If our nations waged war for greed and murder such as ISIS does today, then that gives the occasion for Christians to stand against it.

When Jesus returns, *will he love his enemies and turn the other cheek?* What does your Bible say? "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness ***he doth judge and make war.***

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should ***smite the nations:*** and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: ***and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.***" (Rev 19:11, 15). Jesus is the King of Kings, and has every right to execute vengeance on them that fight against him, and punish the world for their sins.

### **Self defense**

What of defending your property and family? Self-defense here is defined as "protecting oneself from injury at the hand of others." Self-defense is *not* about taking vengeance. Self-defense is *not* about punishing criminals. Self-defense involves preserving one's own health and life when it is *threatened* by the actions of *others*, in a right and lawful way.

What does the Bible say about self defense? Exodus 22:2 says, "If a thief be found breaking up, *and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed* for him." If someone breaks into your home one can defend one's self and property, it is the intruder who has broken the law. If the

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intruder dies during the fight, no blood is shed for him, the person who defended his property is not guilty of any crime.

The *only* time one should *not* despise a thief is if the thief is stealing because he is on the brink of starvation (Proverbs 6:30).

Solomon wrote that man was to fight only if he is attacked, "Strive not with a man *without cause, if he have done thee no harm.*" (Prov 3:30). The Pulpit Commentary says, "The phrase, *gumal raah*, is to bring evil upon any one (Schultens). The verb *gamal* signifies 'to do, to give, to show to any one.' Holdea renders, 'Surely he will *return* thee evil,' *in the sense that unprovoked attack ensures retaliation.*" (emphasis added). If one is provoked, or attacked, one is allowed to defend him or herself, family, or property.

Back to Exodus 22, "If the *sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed* for him; *for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*" (Ex 22:3). What does this mean, "If the sun be risen upon him"? Other scriptures shed light.

Paul wrote, "Be ye angry, and sin not: *let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*" (Ephesians 4:26). This "...seems to be a proverbial expression; and the design of it is to show, *that anger should not be continued;*" (Gill's Commentary, emphasis added).

"...'Before sunset' (when the Jewish day began) is proverbial for '*put it away at once before another day begin*' (Deut 24:15);" (JFB Commentary, emphasis added).

When a thief is caught he must go through the courts as the Bible says, as the "judges determine" (Ex 21:22) and judgment is pronounced on him and face his penalty. But, "If the sun be risen upon him [the thief]" meaning if the victim *continues* to pursue him after-to execute his own vengeance on him and take matters into his own hands, then blood shall be shed for the death of the thief. God wants order and justice, vigilantism is condemned in the Bible (Read our booklet Capital Punishment is it Christian?).

Now during that time, the Israelites had their *own arms* not just the army, and carried them for self defense. In fact, God wanted his people armed to protect themselves! God did not plan for just the army to be armed! The Israelites were expected to have their own personal weapons. Every man would be summoned to arms when the nation confronted an enemy. They did not send in the Marines. The people defended themselves. (see 1 Samuel 25:13).

A good example of people protecting themselves is found in Nehemiah 4:17-18, 21, "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, *and with the other hand held a weapon.*

"For the builders, every one had his *sword girded by his side*, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

"So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared"

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Further, we have accounts of David, not a soldier, not a law enforcement officer, but a youth, employing ranged weapons skillfully (with God's help) against bears and lions. This is domestic use of lethal weaponry, non-military use, with non-military training. The weapons used by young David are not "kiddie" slingshots. They are powerful enough to kill a bear and lion--in today's market, we're talking about a .44 magnum, not a .22, in the hands of someone too young to be in the army. (see 1 Sam 17:34-37). We might be tempted to think that was just for dealing with animals that could threaten sheep. But aren't humans worth even more protection than sheep?

When Israel however went apostate, "They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" (Judges 5:8). The people had new gods and put away their weapons for self defense.

The Bible says that there is "A *time* to kill," (Eccl 3:3). The Hebrew word is "hârag" meaning "to smite with deadly intent:" (Strong's #2026). The Commentary says, ". . . *judicially, criminals; or in wars of self-defense; not in malice. Out of this time and order, killing is murder.*" (JFB commentary, emphasis added). There is a time when one has to defend one's self when faced with danger, and done lawfully and justly it is not murder.

But some may argue, "Didn't Jesus say to love our enemies, and bless those who curse us, and do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us?" (Matt. 5:43-48.) Yes. However, notice the context of the passage, "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*" (v.43).

"...for the first of these only is the law of Moses, Lev 19:18, the other is the addition, or *wrong interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees:*" (Gill's Commentary). Jesus was dealing with the *interpretation* of the law by the Pharisees. Jesus said, "For I say unto you, That except *your* righteousness shall *exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, [their interpretation of the law] ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 5:20).

Notice what Jesus said, he quotes Lev 19:18, look at the context, "*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*" Love your enemies, means not to take personal vengeance on them if they wronged you. To *hate* your enemy is one who has wronged you, and *hatred motivates a person* to take personal vengeance, because one ends up hating the person that has wronged them. The Bible in the Old and the New Testaments *condemns personal vengeance*. The scribes interpreted the law by saying that one can take personal vengeance on a person by the scribes *lifting out of context* "an eye for an eye." But the context is "as the judges determine." *Only* the government can execute vengeance on people who have broken the law, one cannot take the law into their own hands-This is what Jesus was dealing with!

God is a God of justice (Psalm 89:14). To execute Justice was *only* done by the state, as the "Judges determine." These references refer to assaults, offenses and character assassinations among fellow brethren or in the modern sense among Canadian or American citizens. Jesus is not saying, "Do good to those who are trying to physically harm your family." The Bible says you can protect your family from intruders, thieves and murderers. Only, after they are caught, let the government issue out the penalty for their crimes.

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Again the Old Testament says, , "If thou meet *thine enemy's ox* or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

"If thou see the ass *of him that hateth thee* lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him" (Ex 23:4-5; see also Proverbs 25:21). This is consistent with Jesus teaching of "love your enemies." The context was *among brethren-fellow Israelites!* They were statements on how *to repair breaches* and maintain *fair justice* and order *among physical and spiritual brethren*, after one has wronged the other, and the judges and courts have settled the matter. If the person is let back into society, do not take vengeance on him or her, but treat him or her like any other citizen-love your enemy.

Paul tells Timothy that if "any do not care for their own, and especially for those of their own house, they have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers" (1 Tim. 5:8). But those who seek to protect their family, which is often a greater responsibility (if not equal), are often labeled war-mongers and accused of misapplying the Scriptures, which is totally wrong. One must protect ones family from criminals who want to harm them, like murderers, kidnappers, thieves etc...

Proverbs 24:11-12 calls us as citizens to intervene if someone is taken by a lawless thief, robber, murderer, etc. we are called to do all we can to intervene and stop it. We read, "If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be slain;

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?* and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?* and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?"

Then there is Deuteronomy 22:23-27 which deals with rape. Verse 27 has in view a woman who is raped and she calls for help and the verse says "*and there was none to save her.*" Clearly the implication is that if someone would have heard, there would have been a moral duty to intervene and protect her from being raped, by whatever means was available. To stand by and do nothing would be immoral.

"Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:4). This can include nations that fight in wars that are just and right, to rescue the oppressed from their wicked leaders, as well as citizens rescuing people from murderers, rapists, thieves etc...

### **Martial Arts & Weapons**

Many people study the martial arts for self defense. The martial arts themselves teach that it only should be done in self defense. David himself was taught the art of self defense and war, "He *teacheth my hands to war*, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.... Blessed *be* the LORD my strength, *which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:*" (Psalm 18:34; 144:1). Skill and ability to use weapons here, whether literal and/or metaphorical, is positively portrayed in these verses. To study the martial arts for one to *only* defend himself is not contrary to the scriptures. This can be a vital tool one can use to defend his family, property and even one's own nation if called upon to do so.



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The final Old Testament passage we examine is in the book of Esther. Here we have a historical example arranged by Divine Providence. In this account, the Jews are under threat of racial violence. The civil authority, King Ahasuerus, grants them legal permission to use lethal force in self-defense: "By these letters the *king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives -- to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions...*" (Esther 8:11-12).

So they have *legal* sanction to "protect their lives" using ultimate force, much as we do in most parts of this country. They are allowed to "kill and annihilate" in order to "protect their lives." Now, as people under obligation to *obey* God, *not* just stay *within* the civil laws of Ahasuerus, what did the Jews do with this legal freedom?

"...the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them....The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people.... Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, " (Esther 9:1-2, 5).

We see that given legal sanction to defend their lives with lethal force, they did not choose non-violence. Rather, as it says in verse 11, to "protect their lives", they use the "sword" (verse 5). Here is another example of widespread use of weapons in self-defense—a non-wartime, non-law enforcement scenario. If this was against the law of God, the Jews would have risen with one voice and told the King that this was against their religion—but they did not, they knew the Law of God permitted self defense.

God Almighty want us to protect ourselves from *evil* people who wish to do us harm, a foolish nation on the other hand disarms themselves Judges 5:8.

### New Testament?

What of the New Testament and self defense?

How did Jesus feel about arms? Did he react like most anti-gun, anti-second amendment people today?

"And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

"Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: *and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.*

"For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

And they said, Lord, behold, *here are two swords.* And he said unto them, It is enough." (Luke 22:35-38). You see among the disciples *arms!* Jesus' disciples were carrying swords during the time of his ministry for self protection with *his* consent. Perhaps it was protection against robbers. Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:26 cites the "perils of robbers."

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Jesus also expected them to have swords and anticipated a *time when those without swords would need to acquire them*, and expected them to carry the swords on their person as they traveled from the city to the garden prayer meeting.

What does it mean, "that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors:"? Many take this to mean that Jesus just needed a sword so the scripture could be fulfilled. But actually, "By the very form of the expression it is evident, that the sword alluded to could have no reference to *that night's danger*, or the *defending Him from it*." (Alford's The Greek New Testament, emphasis his).

This meant that his disciples would need a sword *afterwards* because he would be numbered among the transgressors when *crucified* (Mark 15:28). *Afterwards*, in the future, "When he *first* sent them out to preach they were welcomed everywhere. He now ironically suggests that they should sell their cloaks to buy swords-*they will need them!*" (The International Bible Commentary, by F.F. Bruce, p.1223, emphasis added). When Jesus would be *known* as a transgressor, his disciples will be known as a follower of a transgressor and therefore the rulers and public would say "they are just as bad as Jesus was" and *therefore* would need arms to defend themselves!

### Young Revolutionaries

In Matthew 26:52, Jesus says to Peter, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." Jesus didn't denounce the sword, *but clarified its place*. The disciples were young would-be revolutionaries that thought Jesus was going to take over Jerusalem and kick out the occupying armies and Peter thought it was about to start. This kind of militaristic move of *aggressive* warfare is what Christ was speaking of! By perishing by the sword those that pick up the sword, *meant* militaristic aggressive warfare. One can see this in Luke's Gospel, the disciples said to Jesus, "When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, *shall we smite* with the sword?" (Luke 22:49). The Lord hates the one who "loves violence" (Psalm 11:5). Jesus told Peter to put his sword in its place – at his side. He didn't say throw it away. After all, He had just ordered the disciples to arm themselves for the future.

No Jesus said that the Kingdom of God would not be brought about in this way, the way man brings about Kingdoms and empires by revolutions and uprisings, "My kingdom is *not of this world*: if my kingdom were of this world, then *would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews*: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36).

But Notice what Jesus says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Jesus could have called the Father to help *protect them* from the evil men who wanted to kill Jesus but the scriptures had to be fulfilled. Self protection and preservation Jesus believed in.

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## Jesus & Paul get slapped

What of the two instances when Paul and Jesus get slapped across the face? Did Jesus turn the "other cheek"? Yes! When Jesus was slapped, He said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23). Turning the other cheek in its proper context meant seeking personal vengeance (see above). Here Jesus was *not* seeking personal vengeance *but did* confront him by saying "why do you strike me?" Jesus was no stranger to confrontation, and self preservation.

Notice Paul, "And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

"Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and *commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?*" (Acts 23:2-2). Was this turning the other cheek? Yes! Paul was *not* seeking *personal* vengeance on him but for *God to do so*, because, "Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom 12:19). But Paul, like Jesus *confronted* the High Priest, and told him the error of his ways.

## Should Christians Vote?

There has been a long tradition in the Church of God not to be involved in Politics and *not* to vote. This is only *partially* true, but the *whole* truth must be examined.

As a Christian, we know "that our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), and it is "*reserved* in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4), at this time, and our *first* allegiance is to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As a Church we are the "children of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:38). This is the Kingdom into which we belong, this is true. But does that mean we should not vote?

We must pray, "thy kingdom *come*." (Matthew 6:10).

Notice, the Kingdom *is not here yet* till Jesus comes and sets it up in Jerusalem (Obadiah 1:21; Isaiah 2; 9:6-7; 11, Micah 4).

The word "conversation" in Philippians the third chapter is the "Greek. *politeuma*, Only here in N.T. It sec, in the Septuagint and in 2 Macc. 12.7. The seat of the government of which we are *citizens* (Greek. *politēs*), and of which we *have both rights and responsibilities*." (Bullinger's Companion Bible notes, emphasis added). Our politics, government, citizenship, rights and responsibilities, are *reserved* in heaven for us, and will take *full effect* at the second coming of Jesus when the Kingdom is set up. *Until that time, we are also citizens in the kingdoms and nations of men.*

Are we to exercise our citizenships in our nations today? Are we to pay taxes (not a choice, but Christians must obey the law of the land) and vote and belong to political parties if we *choose* to? The Bible says, Yes!

Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things [plural] which are Caesar's; and unto God the things [plural] that are God's." (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). They asked Jesus,

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"What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" (v.17). They wanted to know whether people should pay taxes to Caesar, and Jesus said Yes! That we must do our duty as citizens to pay our taxes, and *other laws* concerning citizenship in whatever countries we belong. I am a Canadian citizen, and enjoy unprecedented freedoms and prosperity (some of which are based on biblical principles), and I must obey and exercise my right as a citizen in this great land; *but* when there is a conflict between Christian and Canadian values, I should always choose Christ first, "We ought to *obey God* rather than men." (Acts 5:29; 4:19). Salvation is always first because salvation is forever, this life and nation is temporal, the Kingdom of God is eternal, "and unto God the things that are God's."

Clarke's Commentary states, "What does a man owe to Caesar? - to the civil government under which he lives? Our Lord has answered the question - **That which IS Caesar's**. But what is it that is Caesar's? 1. Honour. 2. Obedience. And 3. Tribute.

1. The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honor and reverence.
2. The laws which are made for the suppression of evil doers, and the maintenance of good order, which are calculated to promote the benefit of the whole, and the comfort of the individual should be religiously obeyed.
3. The government that charges itself with the support and defense of the whole, should have its unavoidable expenses, however great, repaid by the people, in whose behalf they are incurred; therefore we should pay tribute.

"But remember, *if Caesar should intrude into the things of God*, coin a new creed, or broach a new Gospel, and affect to rule the conscience, *while he rules the state*, in these things Caesar is *not to be obeyed*; he is taking the things of God, and he must not get them. Give not therefore God's things to Caesar, and give not Caesar's things to God." (emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul himself exercised his Roman citizenship when he was about to be punished, and said, "...unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a *Roman*, and uncondemned?

"When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: *for this man is a Roman*.

"Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, *Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea*.

"And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free born*." (Acts 22:25-28).

Earlier in Acts the 16th chapter the "magistrates" and the people beat Paul and Silas and put them in prison, and the Apostle Paul said to the keepers of the Prison that it was unlawful what they did to them as Romans citizens (Acts 16:36-37). Barnes's Notes says, "Paul *knew the privileges* of a Roman citizen, and at proper times, when the interests of justice and religion *required it*, he *did not hesitate to assert them*. In all this, he understood and accorded with the Roman laws. The Valerian law declared that if a citizen appealed from the magistrate to the people, it should not be lawful for magistrate to beat him with rods, or to behead him (Plutarch, Life of P. Valerius Publicola; Livy, ii. 8). By the Porcian law it was expressly forbidden that a citizen should be beaten (Livy, iv. 9)" (emphasis added). His Roman citizenship saved Paul from certain beating

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and death. He even told Festus that he kept the laws of Caesar (Acts 25:8), and that Caesar ought to judge him (v.10), and said, "I appeal unto Caesar." (Acts 25:11).

So are not Christians, as individuals, not to exercise their right as citizens to vote, and be involved in politics *if they want to*? The Bible says yes! *But* the church as a spiritual organism, **as an organization**, *should not endorse*, or be involved in politics whatsoever, this is up to a church member as a ***citizen of his or her nation***, and has got *nothing* to do with the church of God as a group (organization). In the church itself, the members could be registered voters of the Democrats or Republicans, Tories, or Labor *in their own personal lives*, but in the church group itself we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and what is preached is the "Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). So if a person in the church of God wants to involve him or herself in Politics and vote or join a political party, they have that choice to do so, and it does not contradict the Bible whatsoever, but the church of God as an organization does not and should not endorse or side with any political party, they are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

### God and Politics

One cannot separate God and politics. Daniel says of God that, "he removeth kings, and setteth up kings:" (Daniel 2:21). Again, "to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." (Daniel 4:17; 32). (See also Psalm 75:7; Jer 27:5; 1 Sam 2:7-8; Rom 13:1). God picks who is going to be King, Almighty God supervises all of this, and gives us the leaders *we deserve*, and leaders that will carry out what God wants accomplished on earth; including gentiles as in the case of Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 44:28).

Notice what God says to Israel, "For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, *doth take away* from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

"The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

"The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

"*And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.*" (Isaiah 3:1-4).

Since Israel was sinning, and liked it that way-God gives them the leaders they want and deserve. God says, "I will judge thee according to thy ways," (Ezekiel 7:8). God places a King, or a judge- it's the same, and gives them what they want. So God is involved in politics.

It's the job of the church of God to do the work of the Watchman, and this involves politics. Ezekiel, says, "Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

"*If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;*

"Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

"He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

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"But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

"So thou, O son of man, *I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.*" (Ezekiel 33:1-7). Wars happen because of Politics. The church of God is to "see the sword come." *Not* to be involved in politics, but to "WATCH" and *examine*, and then warn the nations of what is to come, as Isaiah says, "Cry aloud, spare not, *lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people* their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." (Isa 58:1). *Show the people what their sins are and that includes the leaders and their policies!*

God commands, "Hear the word of the LORD, *ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah... O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.*" (Isaiah 1;10; 3:12). The Policies of the rulers of Israel destroy and lay waste the future of their nations, and the Watchman (the church) must lift up their voice and show the people of Israel what their leaders are doing and tell them to repent!

Christians are also to pray for the leaders of the land so we can have peace and security, by making the right decisions that are good for the nation, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; "For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." (1 Tim 2:1-2).

The Prophets of God were also involved in *politics in the sense that they were the moral compass for the nation and its leaders*. The prophets told the leaders and the nation to repent (see Isaiah 1:10, the whole book of Jeremiah etc...).

The Church of God should also be the guide for the morality of the culture. The silence in the churches have led to Hollywood and the mainstream media to be the guides of the culture which has led to immorality and death.

The Church of God should preach and teach to the congregations and the general public what God wants from them, *and in turn*, it will be reflected at the voting box when people exercise their right as a citizen to vote. People would pick the right leaders that will execute righteousness in the nation, so we can maintain the Christian freedoms that many soldiers died to defend.

Also if the government issues out a vote for a certain moral cause, a Christian should exercise his or her right as a citizen to vote with a Christian conscience. Morality does effect government decisions. If the Church was more vocal about abortion, and in turn, the citizens would exercise their right to vote in leaders that were against it, and also judges. That would have saved 50 million babies since Roe vs. Wade. One should vote according to the morality of the Bible learned in church.

Today, churches want to be Politically correct and be loved by the secular world, and therefore the power of the pulpit has waned. Jesus said that, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and*

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when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, *for the Son of man's sake*.

"Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (Luke 6:22-23). Blessed are you when you stand for truth, righteousness and for his names sake. The world hates that because the world loves sin, and the world will hate you for it, but you are *Blessed* by God.

Then Jesus said, "*Woe unto you*, when all men shall speak *well of you!* for so did their fathers to the *false prophets*." (v.26). Churches that well spoken of by the media and Hollywood because they agree and preach political correctness which is anti-God and the Bible, Jesus says "woe" to those who do so, and are *false prophets, ministers teachers* etc... Stand up for Jesus and the truth of the Bible!

So the church of God, its members allegiance is to the Kingdom of God, but as citizens of the kingdoms of men, can exercise their right to vote, serve in the military, defend themselves, pay taxes (no choice here), study martial arts if they *choose* to, this does not contradict the Bible whatsoever. But the church of God, as a group, an organization, should not involve itself in politics, endorse candidates of whatever political parties, be activists etc...No this is not the job of the church. The Church is to "WATCH" (Mark 13:37), world news, events examine, and lift up their voice as a witnesses and a warning to all nations about the coming kingdom of God, telling people to repent and believe the Gospel!