

THE ROLE OF BELIEVERS AND THE CHURCH IN OUR SOCIETY

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We who believe in God – our Lord Jesus Christ – are collectively known as the Church. Though we may differ on some important points, we are united in our belief that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the grave to give us life with Him. You might well ask, “What is God’s intent for the Church – for us believers? How does He want believers and the church to function in society?”

When God chose Abraham, and consequently the nation of Israel, he did so as a means of blessing all the people of the earth through them. Ultimately, this culminated in the birth, life, death and resurrection of God the Son – Jesus Christ.

When God created the nation of Israel after their exodus from Egypt, He gave them what we call the Ten Commandments. Afterwards other laws were added – all *for the good of the people*. These laws were to instruct God’s people to live lives that honored Him and led to healthy and prosperous lives for those who would obey Him. His intention was that the Jewish people were to *model* what life with Him was like so that other people would see the benefits of this life and desire to know God. The Jews were *not directed to impose their faith in God* on other peoples but were to make it attractive to unbelievers *by their example*.

There are some Christians today who would like to make America a theocracy with the Christians in charge. This is not what God intends. He created us all with free will – to be able to accept Him or reject Him – not to be required by the state or any church to follow any specific dogma. God wants to be gloried in and through the people He created.

There is no glory for Him if people are coerced into following any particular set of religious rules. Having said that, many of the precepts of the *Bible* are good for everyone and deserve consideration and acceptance. In light of God’s intentions, how is it appropriate for believers in Jesus Christ to function in today’s society?

Jesus told us to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16) – to flavor it and to illuminate the truth. The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:12 that we should “*live such good lives among the [unbelievers] that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*” Again, Jesus counseled us to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” (Matthew 28:19-20) What is the appropriate way to obey Jesus in our society? Let me set forth what ought to be obvious to all believers:

- We should behave righteously, do good to all and take the opportunities God gives us through this goodness to tell people about Jesus and His love. We should be active doing good in our community and the world.
- We should teach those who are willing how to walk in God’s ways.
- We should be vigilant and get involved in the affairs of our community and nation to provide righteous input and influence as new laws are considered to ensure they really are for the good for society. This can be done on both a personal level and through our local churches. We know right from wrong. We should stand for right and actively oppose wrong.
- We must do all these things in love, respecting and loving those who disagree with us.

I am confident that, as we follow this plan, which I believe is in accord with God’s revealed will, He will come alongside us to bless many people and restore our nation to its goodness and greatness. Please pray about this and simply do as God shows you.