

From Albert Barnes commentary on Romans 13:1-7 ... What would have been the political climate facing these believers? (Condensed version; for full comments please see post on the church blog.)

- (1) **The Christian religion was designed to extend throughout the world.** Yet it contemplated the rearing of a kingdom amid other kingdoms, an empire amid other empires. Christians professed supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ ... "what kind" of allegiance they were to render to earthly magistrates.
- (2) **The kingdoms of the world were then "pagan" kingdoms. The laws were made by pagans, and were adapted to the prevalence of paganism.** Those kingdoms had been generally founded in conquest, and blood, and oppression. Many of the monarchs were blood-stained warriors; were unprincipled men; and were polluted in their private, and oppressive in their public character.
- (3) **Many of the early Christians were composed of Jewish converts.** The whole pagan magistracy they regarded as founded in a system of idolatry; as opposed to God and his kingdom; and as abomination in his sight. How far they should submit, if at all, to heathen magistrates? There was danger that the "Jewish" converts might prove to be disorderly and rebellious citizens of the empire.
- (4) **Nor was the case much different with the "Gentile" converts. They would naturally look with abhorrence on the system of idolatry which they had just forsaken. They would regard all as opposed to God.** They would denounce the "religion" of the pagans as abomination; and as that religion was interwoven with the civil institutions, there was danger also that they might denounce the government altogether, and be regarded as opposed to the laws of the land,
- (5) **There "were" cases where it was right to "resist" the laws.** When the laws interfered with the rights of conscience; when they commanded the worship of idols, or any moral wrong, then it was their duty to refuse submission. Yet in what cases this was to be done, where the line was to be drawn? **It is quite probable, however, that the main danger was, that the early Christians would err in "refusing" submission, even when it was proper, rather than in undue conformity to idolatrous rites and ceremonies.**

It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning (Douglas Moo).

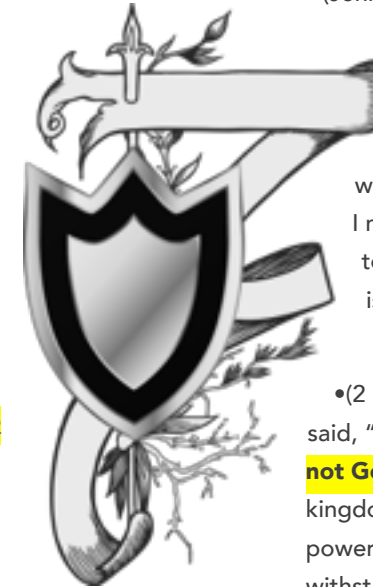
Our Lord was born into a society where political corruption and autocratic rule were common. Merciless tyrants and murderous dictators were everywhere, along with human slavery—the antitheses of democracy. Those were almost unchallenged norms (John MacArthur).

Whose Kingdom Come?

- (Matthew 22:21 NLT) "Caesar's," they replied. "Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

- (Daniel 2:21-22 NASB95) It is **He** who changes the times and the epochs; **He** removes kings and establishes kings; **He** gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. It is **He** who reveals the profound and hidden things; **He** knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

- (Isaiah 46:9b-10 ESV) **For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,** declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'



- (John 18:36 ESV) Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

- (2 Chronicles 20:6 ESV) [Jehoshaphat] said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."

"He" Is Sovereign LORD!

Whose Priorities?

- **At issue is the matter of priority, of realizing that even the greatest earthly good we may be able to accomplish in the temporal world pales beside what the Lord is able to accomplish through us in the spiritual work of His kingdom (MacArthur).**