

# How Should Christians Participate in This Present World?

## *A Study Outline*

### I. What is the condition of this present world?

#### A. Paul called this time period an age subject to emptiness and decay.

*“For the creation was made subject to **vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of **corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now” (Romans 8:20-22).*

**vanity** (3153) = *mataiotes*, “inutility; fig. transientness; mor. depravity; used here to stress emptiness as to results, with the creation failing in the results designed owing to sin.”

**corruption** (5356) = *phthora*, “decay, i.e. ruin (spontaneous or inflicted); here meaning a bringing or being brought into an inferior or worse condition, a destruction or corruption.”

#### B. Jesus Christ termed this aeon “evil”.

*“This is an **evil** generation ...” (Luke 11:29).*

**generation** (1074) = *genea*, “a generation; by impl. an age”.

#### C. Paul further called the age “evil”.

*“... that He might deliver us from this present **evil world**, according to the will of God and our Father ...” (Galatians 1:4).*

**evil** (4190) = *poneros*, “hurtful, i.e. evil (in effect or influence).”

**world** (9165) = *aion*, “an age, era”.

#### D. Satan rules the culture of this society by influencing people to do evil.

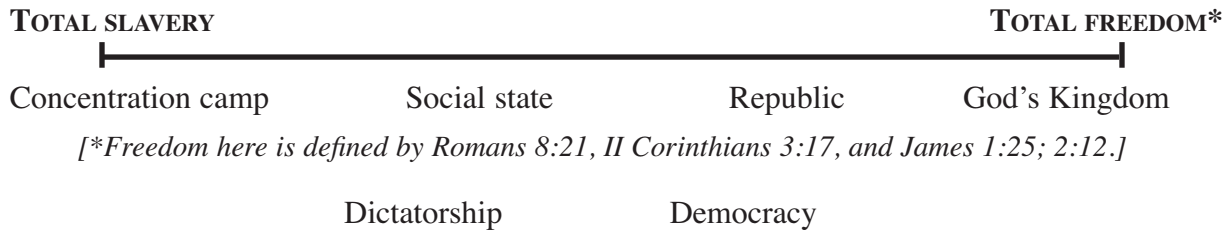
*“... wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience ...” (Ephesians. 2:2).*

*“... in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not ...” (II Corinthians 4:4).*

#### E. John indicated “... the whole world lies in wickedness” (I John 5:19).

#### F. Many forms of government exist in this world, but all are predicated on authoritarian rulership, wherein those lower down on the structure of the pyramid serve and support those

above them. The only difference among these forms lies in the degree to which this hierarchy oppresses people.



1. “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called **benefactors**” (Luke 22:25).  
**benefactors** (2110) = *euaresteo*, “to gratify entirely”.
2. All governments of men rule through **fear** and **force**, patterned after the nature of the motivator of these governments, Satan the devil.
3. In the United States, we have a democracy (“rule by the mob”), wherein people vote for representatives that are supposed to represent them in Congress and the Presidency: i.e., the majority is to rule. Yet, special interests have come to rule so strongly, and leaders have become so unresponsive to their electorate and to Constitutional directives, that we have moved toward a socialist dictatorship and a “New World Order”.
4. Even though Satan rules in the present-day world — much like Saul did even after David’s anointing to be king (I Samuel 16:11-13) — yet he can install rulers only at the agreement of the Father, to whom he is still responsible ... and he can only do what the Father allows (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-6).

“... to the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the **basest** of men” (Daniel 4:17).

**basest** (8215) = *shephal*, “low”; from *shaphal* (8213), “to depress or sink; literally to be low, sink down, be humiliated, be abased.”

“... He removes kings and sets up kings ...” (Daniel 2:21).

“... the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will” (Daniel 4:25).

See also Daniel 4:32 and 5:21.

II. Christians are not to be a part of this societal structure which Satan directly influences.

- A. While we cannot remove ourselves from this earth, yet we can avoid participating in the evil which surrounds us on all sides.

*“I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil [one]”* John 17-15.

*“Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues”* (Revelation 18:4).

See also Jeremiah 51:45.

*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord; touch not the unclean things and I will receive you ...”* (II Corinthians 6:17).

- B. We are an unusual people and a royal priesthood

*“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light ...”* (I Peter 2:9).

- C. We are ambassadors of a nation not yet established here on the earth.

*“Now then we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God”* (II Corinthians 5:20).

**ambassadors** (4243) = *presbeuo*, “to be a senior, i.e. (by impl.) to act as a representative; literally it means to be an ambassador” See also Ephesians 6:20 where ambassador (*presbeuo*) is also used in the same context.

- D. As ambassadors and not a part of this world’s government, we do not participate in selecting political representatives, but we **do** participate in the affairs of the ecclesia.

1. Ambassadors do not vote in the foreign country in which they serve; rather, they vote in their home country. That country is the Kingdom or family of God, the ecclesia, in which we indeed are to “vote”.

*“And when they had **ordained** them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed”* (Acts 14:23).

**ordained** (5500) = *cheirototoo*, “to be a hand-reacher or voter (by raising the hand); to select or appoint; used of voting in the Athenian legislative assembly and meaning to stretch forth the hands.”

2. Only someone who can see into the inner motives and capabilities of potential leaders is qualified to select leaders, and those abilities are possible only through God’s spirit of discernment.
3. Yet, we must take advantage of whatever citizenship we may have as recognized by the world’s system, as did Paul.

*“For if I [Paul] be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I*

*refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11). See also Acts 22:24-29 and Acts 23-27.*

E. The world does not recognize us for who we are.

*“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knows us not, because it knew not Him” (I John 3:1).*

F. Like Jesus Christ was not a part of this world, so are we not a part of it as we walk in Christ’s footsteps (I John 2:6).

1. We express the fruits of the spirit, not the fruits of carnality.

*“This I say then, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that you would.... But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:16-17, 22-24).*

2. Christ knows who His sheep are.

*“I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15).*

3. We are to fulfill the law and the prophets just as Jesus Christ did, by the power of His spirit within us.

*“Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).*

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people ...” (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33).*

*“Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them, for this is [the meaning of] the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).*

*“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to them, ‘You*

*shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets'” (Matthew 22:36-40).*

III. While not participating in this world’s culture, what then do we do?

A. Like already discussed, we follow in Christ’s footsteps.

B. To follow Jesus Christ means to do the works that He did. We do not fall into the trap of contending that because Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly we no longer have to keep it. We know that when we sin (break the law) we have an advocate in the Father, who forgives us on our repentance (I John 2:1-2). By doing good works we become lights that cannot be hidden.

*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).*

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).*

*“But (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works” (I Timothy 2:10; see also I Timothy 5:10, 25; 6:18).*

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17).*

See also Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14.

*“... and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 10:24).*

*“What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he has faith and has not works? Can faith save him? .... Yes, a man may say, ‘You have faith and I have works’, show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works .... But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:14, 18, 20; note all of James 2:14-26).*

Christ spoke of the works of all of the churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2:2, 5, 9, 13, 19, 23, 26; 3:1-2, 8, 15), and surely desires us in the modern-day ecclesia to do them.

C. We must provide for our families with “servile” work, though on six days of the week only.

*“Six days shall you labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work ...” (Exodus 20:9-10).*

*“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of this own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (I Timothy 5:8).*

*“Let him who stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs” (Ephesians 4:28).*

D. Our service must be to all, but especially to the ecclesia.

*“And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10).*

*“You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).*

E. We do good even in the face of evil.

*“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay’, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink, for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21; see also I Thessalonians 5:15; Proverbs 20:22; Matthew 5:38-48; I Peter 3:9).*

F. Materialism should find no place in our lives; God will provide our every need.

*“Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15; see also Luke 12:16-21).*

*“Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25).*

G. Our thoughts should be towards the glorious Kingdom on into the future.

*“But seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33; see also Matthew 6:26-34).*

*“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).*



*“For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).*

- H. We show preference to the brethren during our sojourn in this present world, and must not forsake our fellowship.

*“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another ...” (Romans 12:10).*

*“Fulfill my joy, that you be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:2-5).*

Note Galatians 6:10, where we are told to do good to all men, but especially to the brethren.

*“And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are built up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it ...” (Malachi 3:15-16).*

*“... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).*

IV. How should we expect the world to treat us? This society will hate and persecute us!

- A. *“If the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, ‘The servant is not greater than his lord’. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you ...” (John 15-18-20).*
- B. *“I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).*
- C. *“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that you should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you” (I John 3:11-13).*
- D. Therefore, since Satan is the god of this world, the champion of sin, carnality, lies, and death, and the world is caught up in his ways, then those who oppose him should expect to be persecuted.

*“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child .... And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).*

- V. In spite of the world's not accepting us and its mistreatment of us, we will gain the victory over this world and sin in it, and will ultimately reign with Jesus Christ on it.
- A. *"These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).
- B. *"What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all thing? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loves us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:31-39)
- C. *"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"* (Revelation 20:4).
- D. We ought not live like hermits to try and separate ourselves from this society, but rely upon God to preserve us and prosper us through the many difficult situations we face as we gain the victory continually over Satan, sin, and ourselves. We must live *in* the world but not be a part of the world.

*"I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil [one]. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your world is truth."* (John 17:15-17).