

Most “Christians” claim the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome instructs them to be always subservient to any government. Paul writes, “Let every soul be subject to higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, but the existing authorities have been ordained by God. So that the one resisting authority has opposed the ordinance of God, and the ones opposing will receive judgment to themselves.”

I disagree and believe that no man has a moral obligation to obey an unjust law! In fact, the Scriptures show several examples of men disobeying unjust laws AND having favor shown on them from YHWH.

Daniel records not one, but two such instances.

“Daniel was preferred above the presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king was planning to set him over all the kingdom. Then the presidents and satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. But they could find no occasion or fault because he was trustworthy. And no error or fault was found in him. Then these men said, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the Law of his God.

“Then these presidents and satraps gathered together to the king and said this to him, 'King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects, and the satraps, the officials and the governors, have planned together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, he shall be thrown into the den of lions.' And when he had learned that the document was signed, Daniel went to his house. And his windows were open in his roof room toward Jerusalem. He knelt on his knees three times in the day, and prayed and praised before his God, as he did before... And they brought Daniel, and they threw him into the lions' den.” (Daniel 6:3-16)

Did Daniel, or any other person, have a moral obligation to follow such an unjust law? No, nor does anyone have a moral obligation to follow ANY unjust law.

Did the three men called, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (whose Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) have a moral obligation to obey the command to “fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship, at that moment they will be thrown into the middle of a burning, fiery furnace”? (Daniel 3:1-6)

No, nor does anyone have a moral obligation to follow ANY unjust law.

Yeshua taught in one of His first (and most famous) public sermons, “Blessed are the meek...Blessed are the merciful...Blessed are the pure in heart...Blessed are the peacemakers!” (Matthew 5:3-12 & Luke 6:20-22) If Yeshua consistently preached mercy, love and peace; how can those who claim to follow His teachings promote indifference, hatred and war?

Even the Messiah felt no moral obligation to obey unjust laws and practiced civil disobedience on more than one occasion.

The most obvious of these acts involves the picking/eating of grain on the Sabbath. "At that time on the sabbath, Yeshua went through the grain fields. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But seeing, the Pharisees said to Him, "Behold, your disciples are doing what it is not lawful to do on the sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he and those with him hungered? How he entered into the house of God, and he ate the Loaves of the Presentation, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests only? Or have you not read in the Law that on the sabbaths the priests in the temple profane the sabbath and are guiltless? But I say to you, One greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this is, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is also Lord of the sabbath." (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28 & Luke 6:1-5)

The Hebrew Law was strict about "working" on the Sabbath, but Jewish tradition had added restrictions to the point of voiding the original intent. Not to mention that His claim of being "Lord of the Sabbath" was equivalent to a claim of Deity. It was this claim that led the Pharisees and Sanhedrin to eventually arrest Yeshua and have him put to death. It is during these trials, one before the Sanhedrin and one before Pilate, that Yeshua's civil disobedience can best be seen.

Some theologians argue that since Yeshua "agreed" to be tried before Pilate, that He recognized and submitted to his authority, and thus regarded Pilate's authority as legitimate. This is not necessarily the case. Yeshua's attitude during the trial is consistent, but is shown in various forms: silence, accusation of authorities or deliberate provocation.

Yeshua is first accused of saying he would destroy the Temple. He remained silent. Again, in front of Pilate, Yeshua faced many accusations and remained silent. This is not because He was being submissive to their perceived authority, but perhaps because he knew that the trial would not bring justice and felt no need to defend himself.

He even takes a jab at his accusers, first when they arrest Him, "Have you come out to take Me with swords and clubs, as against a plunderer? I sat with you daily teaching in the temple, and you did not lay hands on Me." (Mathew 22:55) Then before the High Priest, "Then the high priest questioned Yeshua about His disciples and about His doctrine. Yeshua answered him, 'I publicly spoke to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple where the Jews always come together, and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those hearing what I spoke to them: behold, these know what I said!'" (John 18:19-21) And lastly when tried before Pilate, "Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to crucify You, and I have authority to release You?' Yeshua answered, 'You would have no authority against Me, not any, if it were not given to you from above. Because of this, the one

delivering Me to you has a greater sin.” (John 19:10-11) Some claim that Yeshua is telling Pilate that his authority comes from YHWH, but if we look at the temptation of Yeshua in the wilderness, we see that earthly power comes from Lucifer. (Matthew 4:8)

Lastly, we find provocation on the part of the Messiah. When He is facing the High Priest, “the high priest said to Him, “I put You on oath by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Yeshua said to him, “You said it. I tell you more. From this time you shall see the Son of Man sitting off the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of the heaven.” (Mathew 26:63-64) He never calls himself the “Messiah” or the “son of YHWH”, only “the Son of Man” (i.e. true man). Next, Yeshua uses provocation with Pilate, “Pilate again went into the praetorium and called Yeshua, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Yeshua answered him, “Do you say this from yourself, or did others tell you about Me?” Pilate answered, “Not, am I a Jew? Your nation, even the chief priests, delivered You up to me! What did You do?” Yeshua answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have fought that I might not be delivered up to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.” Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You really a king?” Yeshua answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I might witness to the Truth. Everyone being of the Truth hears My voice.” (John 18:33-37)

During the trials of Yeshua, with both political and religious authorities, He answers with a mix of irony, scorn, non-cooperation, indifference and sometimes accusation, but always knowing that they have no real authority over Him.

Pastor Chuck Baldwin writes, “Do our Christian friends who use these verses to teach that we should not oppose any political leader really believe that civil magistrates have unlimited authority to do anything they want without opposition? I doubt that they truly believe that.

For example, what if our President decided to resurrect the old monarchical custom of Jus Primae Noctis (Law of First Night)? That was the old medieval custom when the king claimed the right to sleep with a subject's bride on the first night of their marriage. Would our sincere Christian brethren sheepishly say, "Romans Chapter 13 says we must submit to the government"? I think not. And would any of us respect any man who would submit to such a law? I wouldn't.

So, there are limits to authority. A father has authority in his home, but does this give him power to abuse his wife and children? Of course not. An employer has authority on the job, but does this give him power to control the private lives of his employees? No. A pastor has overseer authority in the church, but does this give him power to tell employers in his church how to run their businesses? Of course not. All human authority is limited in nature. No man has unlimited authority over the lives of other men.”

You see, the group (in this case, government) has no authority not given to the

individual. The group should also, collectively, practice “love towards one another”, for Yeshua tells us, “on these commandments (love YHWH and love your neighbor) all the Law and the Prophets hang”.

If our only duty is to “love YHWH & obey His commands” then we have no moral obligation to obey a law that interferes with obeying YHWH's commands to “love one another.”

In Exodus we read: “Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 'When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live'.” (Exodus 1:15-22) The midwives that refused to kill the sons of the Israelite women were practicing civil disobedience. As were all Israelites when they fled Egypt after Pharaoh refused to let them leave in peace. The Book of Acts records several cases of civil disobedience by the early church and Luke records, “Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men'.”

Did the Hebrew midwives have a moral obligation to assist the Egyptians with killing the sons of the Hebrews?

Did anyone in the United States pre-1865 have a moral obligation to obey the law that forbid giving shelter to a “fugitive slave”?

Did anyone in Nazi Germany have a moral obligation to obey the law that forbid giving aid or shelter to a “Jew”?

Did anyone in the “segregated south” have a moral obligation to obey the laws that mandated segregation?

Neither do you, or I have any moral obligation to obey any unjust law. As James, the brother of Yeshua the Messiah, writes, “whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”