

Thinking Biblically, Part 1: Obeying Civil Authorities

By Dr. George Zemek

Throughout salvation history obeying civil authorities, from the earliest days of the OT right on into the NT age, genuine God-fearers are seen as subjecting themselves to governmental rulers and their regulations as long as they were not placed in a position of disobeying the KING of kings and the LORD of Lords. Remember that Paul spelled out the imperative for such a response in Romans 13:1-7 (at the very time he was living under a despotic emperor).

Also, for example, remember how Joseph responded on several different occasions while in Egypt, how Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Esther responded in the post-exilic era, how Joseph and Mary (with child) responded to the decree from Caesar Augustus. In none of these case scenarios was compliance convenient or easy. But the responses of these saints were ultimately God honoring. To some of those believers from yesteryear the arrival of those heavy-duty tests must have seemed like unreasonable demands from a human vantage point; however, they came to realize that these situations had come to them via the Lord's sovereign providence. Therefore, their unwavering trust in God would bring Him great glory.

Although COVID-19 is not an emperor, king, governor, etc., it has been sent by God to accomplish His sovereign purposes. And a very important test associated with its arrival and course is how the church of Jesus Christ will respond to it, especially when it comes to our compliance to the directives of our governing agencies. These are part of what the Lord has established as instruments to deal with human crises such as this. Furthermore, although none of us has joyously put out a welcome mat for this virus and its challenging complications, we have a great opportunity for exhibiting eternal priorities especially through our trust in God and obedience to His Word. This includes both our submission to the civil agencies He Himself has established (cf. also 1 Peter 2:13-15) and our mandated privilege to present the glorious Gospel of peace to those who around us are panicking.