

# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#97** Commandment #5 – Disobeying authority.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO **BE READY.**

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## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor your father and your mother, ..."  
Exodus 20:12a and Deuteronomy 5:16a (CSB)

AND ALL THAT THIS COMMAND REPRESENTS

★ **Is it ever OK to disobey authority?** ★

YES? NO? MAYBE?

This is the type of question we need to think about *before* the situation arises.  
In the emotion of the event, it will be *too late to think clearly.*

Scripture teaches BOTH authorities and those under authority the right way to interact.

↳ The problem is that BOTH authorities and those under authority tend to ignore what God says.

⇒ **FIRST, regarding the authorities:**

- God has put them there for a purpose (Romans 13:1). If they choose to do wrong, God will pay them back according to their deeds (Romans 2:6; Isaiah 10:1-3; Psalm 2:10-12).
- Scripture tells leaders how to lead – both in what it *teaches* (Jeremiah 22:1-5; Zechariah 7:9-10; Proverbs 29:4) and in what it *condemns* (Isaiah 1:23-26).
- God can remove evil leaders and raise up others (Daniel 2:21).

↳ **HOWEVER...** Those *under* the leader's authority have obligations that will influence the leader's actions. This includes praying for those who lead us (1 Timothy 2:1-2), as well as responding to their leadership in a godly manner. (Last time, we looked at several of these obligations.)

⇒ **SECOND, we who are under their leadership, need to realize:**

- We do not see the whole picture. There are more issues involved, than just the effect of the leader's actions on us (whether it's "us" as individuals, or as a group).
- We may want to "demand" that God change the situation. But if God doesn't do things the way we think he should, we ought to consider this: God says...

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so **My ways are higher than your ways**  
and **My thoughts than your thoughts.**"  
Isaiah 55:9 (BSB)

- If we are not willing to fulfill our responsibilities toward our leaders (including praying for them and building them up), then we have no right to demand that they fulfil *their* responsibilities toward us. We may need to *repent* (as a group), before God does anything to change (or replace) a leader.

- We also need to realize that sometimes the *leader* is a reflection of the sinfulness of the *people*.

The **prophets** prophesy falsely,  
and the **priests** rule by their own authority.  
My **people** love it so, ...  
Jeremiah 5:31a (BSB)

**For from the least of them even to the greatest of them,  
Everyone is greedy for gain,  
And from the prophet even to the priest  
Everyone practices lying.**  
Jeremiah 6:13 (LSB)

- It's always possible that God will not change the *leaders*, until the *people* are willing to change. And since people tend to excuse (or justify) their own sins, any change in leadership won't necessarily happen when we would like it to. (People often ask God for "relief from oppression," but have no interest in God himself.)

★ **But suppose we are following God and doing what we're supposed to be doing** ★  
(including praying for our leaders) ...

**What if the situation is still a mess?**

- ✓ Maybe we're being told to do something wrong.
- ✓ Maybe we're being told to stop doing something right.
- ✓ Maybe they are cruel and harsh.
- ✓ Maybe there is injustice being done.
- ✓ Maybe ... [the list could go on].

✎ **There are things we should NOT do** ⇒ responding the way the *world* often responds.

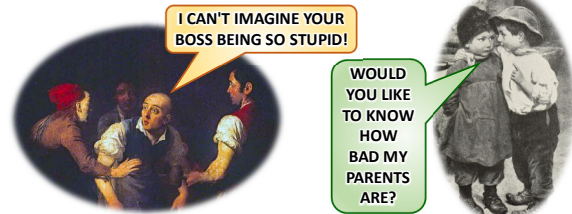
✎ **There are things we should do** ⇒ responding the way Jesus and the apostles (and many Christians down through the centuries) have responded, *regardless of the consequences.*

### 👉 Things we should NOT do.

- If the matter does not involve sin – if it does not violate love for God and neighbor – then most likely, we should *not* refuse to obey the authority.
- There will be many times when we don't understand or don't like an authority's decisions. But liking (or not liking) them is not to be the determining factor for our response.
  - ✓ There may be times we may be able to talk with the authority and come up with a revised plan; but that may depend on the temperament of the authority, as well as *our* past behavior (when interacting with the authority).
- If we choose to disobey the authority in a situation like this, then we *deserve* whatever negative consequences may occur because of our disobedience.

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- Don't respond the way the world does! It doesn't matter whether or not the authority's actions are wrong. **Don't respond by doing wrong!**
- Scripture describes this as "rebellion" and *always* condemns it.
- The sin could involve words – such as going around and telling everyone how bad we think the authority is... this is sin.\*



\* (There may be certain situations in which an authority's sin might need to be reported to higher authorities; but this is not the average situation.)

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- The sin could involve actions – such as doing something violent, and perhaps even harmful to innocent people ...  
... this is sin, *even if the world praises the action!*



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- If we do anything like this, we *deserve* to be punished – **even if we happen to get-away with it.** 🚫



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### 👉 Things we should do.

- Recognize the reality of our responsibility.
- Yes, those who are in authority positions *also* have obligations, which they must follow... and it complicates matters when they don't do so. *But their disobedience does not negate our obligation to obey God.*
  - ✓ Jesus and the apostles were in worse situations than we are. Many of them *died* because they were obeying God (instead of the authorities). The "worst case scenario," which few of us will ever experience, would be to become *like* them in *death*. They were "faithful to the point of death" (Revelation 2:10).
- For about 19 centuries, the church understood what these responsibilities were. In the last century, as the *world's* rebellion against authority intensified, people in the church began to deny, redefine or ignore what Scripture says. Or else admit it, but claim that it does not apply to us.

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- Recognize that those "submit/obey" words (and any similar concepts) are *real* and are *understandable*.
- The modern *world* has distorted them, so we may have to "re-learn" something that was common knowledge for most of the "church age."
  - ✓ If we accept the *world's* definitions of the issue, it may lead us to claiming that the Bible *promotes* something that it actually *condemns*! If that describes our view of the matter, we may have to "un-learn" our views before we can "re-learn" what the Bible *actually* says.
- For example: The word "submit" does not give the authority permission to *destroy* the one who is told to "submit." (Maybe the *world's* type of "submission" does, but not God's type.) Nor does it *devalue* the one who is to submit (though the *world's* type might).
  - ✓ In all this, Jesus is not asking us to do anything that *he himself* wouldn't do! He voluntarily *chose* to submit, obey, etc. – Luke 2:51; Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8.

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- **Be willing to take the time to find out what Scripture says!**
- To become proficient in anything requires time and effort. Yet so many church-goers think that all they need is a few minutes of "religion" each week, and that will be sufficient! All that actually proves is that "following Jesus" is *low* in one's priorities (or not there at all).
  - ✓ In matters like this, if we *have* to go against authority, knowing how to respond may be a complicated issue... and we need to understand the issues *beforehand*, not at the last minute!
- If we are willing to take the time, we will find many commands, instructions and examples (both good and bad) in the Bible, which can guide us in our response.
  - ✓ Some situations may still be difficult... but we will be less likely to pursue a wrong course of action, than if we responded with ignorance of what God says.
  - ✓ If we *do* respond in a way that we later regret, we can trust God to use what happened to accomplish long-term good in our lives (Romans 8:28) – even if the immediate result *isn't* good.

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**All people, from the least to the greatest, will someday bow down before God. Choose to do it now!**

**If, in this life, some choose to disregard their obligation to love God and neighbor ...  
... don't join them!**

... at the name of Jesus **every** knee will bow—  
in heaven and on earth—  
and under the earth—  
and **every** tongue will confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:10-11 (CSB)

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### HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO RESPOND IN SUCH A SITUATION.

(Disclaimer: These are *suggestions*, with Scripture references for you to examine. You may find other Scripture passages that could also contribute to your thinking. Ultimately, YOU have to make the final decision as to what you should do.)

As we have already noted, *all* legitimate authority structures share a common feature: Each is a reflection of the basic principle expressed in the command: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12a). This being the case, the way we respond to authority is a very serious matter.

These principles were originally developed with a focus on one's relationship to *civil* authorities. However, the *principles* given are applicable to any situation in which one person is under another person's authority.

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### THE BASIC ISSUES.

1. **We have an obligation to submit to legitimate authorities that have been placed over us.**  
Romans 13:1-8; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-17.
2. **If, at any time, a human authority tries to get us to do something that goes against God, it is our obligation to disobey the human authority and to obey God** (who is the ultimate authority over all other authorities).  
Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 3:14-17; Matthew 10:28; Acts 4:19-20.

\* (This section is based on an already-published article: "A Few Comments About Civil Disobedience," accessed at <https://www.journal33.org/lovenbr/html/civildis.html> on 10/2/2025.)

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### 3. **If we must disobey a human authority, so that we can obey God, we must ...**

- **Maintain the proper attitude** of respect and honor for that human authority.
- **Willingly submit to whatever consequences** we receive because of our disobedience (though legitimate). This may include unjust punishment, if there is no recourse.

1 Peter 2:19-23 (Jesus' example); 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19.

In addition to Jesus' example, we also have the example of many godly people. One example is seen in Jeremiah 26:11-15, which shows us how Jeremiah reacted, when he was threatened with death. (The threat was later withdrawn.) A key feature of many passages is the *absence* of abusive or disrespectful speech and conduct. For example, Daniel 3:16-18 shows us the response of Daniel's three friends, when faced with death. (They were willing to stand for the truth, but while doing so, they DIDN'T say anything disrespectful.)

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### 4. **In all things, we must maintain a godly attitude.**

- **We must not try to take matters into our own hands (such as retaliation or revenge).** Rather, we must commit the situation to him who is the final Judge of all.

Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:21-23; our proper attitude: Luke 6:27-31; Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 22:37-40.

### MORE COMMENTS ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD AUTHORITY.

**Learning from the prophets:** In the Old Testament, prophets had authority over kings. They could confront kings and speak to them in ways that nobody else would have dared. They had authority to give commands to kings (commands they received from God), and if necessary, even to condemn them (if the king rejected God's Word). Yet we see, in Jeremiah, a person who was willing to maintain a godly attitude, even when his life was being threatened by people who were lower in authority than he was.

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### (MORE COMMENTS (CONTINUED).)

**Learning from Jesus:** Even greater was the authority that Jesus had - the one who is Lord over all creation. When he was being tortured and crucified by people who were much lower in authority, he also maintained a godly attitude. He could have uttered threats and made many vengeful remarks to those who were doing this to him (compare with 1 Peter 2:22-23a). He could have easily sent an army of angels to destroy them all (Matthew 26:53-54). By just uttering the word, he could have come down off the cross and saved himself (compare with Luke 23:37). But love kept him on the cross. He chose rather to say, "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

We need to consider these things, when we are choosing our own response to the unjust suffering caused by others (Matthew 5:38-42; Luke 6:27-31).

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### BEFORE YOU CHOOSE TO DISOBEY... (REQUIREMENTS TO MEET).

1. **Make sure that the things you plan to do are truly what GOD says you must do.**

It's easy for people to tear a verse out of context, to justify their own interests. People have even *killed* innocent people, thinking that doing so pleased God (John 16:2)!

2. **Make sure that your values are not upside-down.**

Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 3:14-17; Matthew 10:28; Acts 4:19-20.

- **A New Testament example of upside-down values** is this: The religious leaders were zealous for even the tiniest matters of the law - such as parts of the sacrificial system and ceremonial rituals, etc. But they had little concern for the things God considered more important - such as justice and mercy (Matthew 23:23-24).

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### (MORE ABOUT VALUES (CONTINUED).)

- **Another example is found in the parable of the "Good Samaritan"** (Luke 10:30-37): Two of the travelers had their values upside down, and considered their religious activities to be more important than helping the injured person.
- **In contrast is the Old Testament example of Abigail**, wife of Nabal (1 Samuel 25): Nabal's values were upside-down and Abigail's values were correct. She gave provisions to David's men, though Nabal refused to do so. If Abigail had *not* done so, it would have been the same as choosing to permit the death of many. To allow this to happen - even if allowed in a *passive* manner - would have been a violation of a higher (God's) authority. (Compare to James 4:17.)
- ✓ Note that, in the original Hebrew language, the name "Nabal" means (rather appropriately) "fool" (1 Samuel 25:25)!

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3. **Make sure that you have a godly attitude.**

This includes having the type of love *God* requires you to have for the authority you are about to disobey. (See Matthew 5:43-48 and 1 Corinthians 13.)

- ✓ People find it more natural to associate disobedience with anger and hate, rather than with love. But God calls us to act differently.

**OTHERWISE - if you have *not* met the above requirements:**

- You will deserve any punishment you may get. (1 Peter 2:20a)
- If people associate your actions with your "faith," you may become guilty of driving them away from the truth. People may end-up cursing God, instead of turning to him, because of your sin. (Compare to Romans 2:24.)
- You will have to give account to God for your actions. Then, at the Day of Justice, everyone will know that your actions did not have God's approval.

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## OUR MISSION:

- ⇒ **Most people who disobey authority are living in sin.** *God calls us to be different.*
- ⇒ **If a situation arises when disobedience seems *necessary*, we need to be careful that we do so in a way that honors God.** At times, it can be a difficult decision.

**We should make it our goal to...**

- ✓ **Learn about the issues *before* they come up.** Then we will be able to respond better.
- ✓ **Commit the results to God** - especially when there seems to be no good solution to the problem. We need to trust his promise that he will use whatever happens (pleasant or unpleasant) to accomplish good in our lives - whether now or in eternity.
- ✓ **Remember to love those who oppose you, just as Jesus did.**

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