

**Romans 13:1-7** *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”*

This morning, we are going to take a closer look at the relationship between the church and the state. Time permitting, we shall take a quick historical view of the relationship between the church and state. Two basic views have developed regarding this relationship. One group believes there should be a union between church and state. The others believe there should be separation between church and state. What is the Biblical view? First view: union between church and state. Second view: separation between church and state.

**I. FIRST VIEW: UNION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE** Prior to around 325 A.D., no Christian held the view that there should be a union between church and state. This all changed when a Roman Emperor declared himself to be a Christian and appointed himself to be the Supreme Head of the Christian Church. His name was Constantine. When the Roman Emperor’s power diminished, this view changed so that the state was no longer the supreme rule over all things secular and ecclesiastic. For almost a thousand years, the Pope ruled as supreme ruler over all things secular and ecclesiastic. Thus there are two basic views held by those who believe in the union between church and state: The belief that the state is supreme verses the view that the church is supreme in authority:

**A. Those who hold this view that there should be a union between church and state refer to the following scriptural principles to support their view: The powers that be are ordained by God – both state and church. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying,**

1. **Matthew 28:18** *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’”*
2. **Ephesians 1:20-22** *“which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”*

**3. All the Old Testament references to Israel as a nation were used and verses that refer to the future millennial reign of Jesus Christ: Isaiah 49:23 “Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet....”**

**B. The Roman Catholic View:** As the Roman Emperor’s power declined, the Roman Catholic view evolved into the belief that the church could dictate to the state. The Pope was supreme ruler over all kings and emperors and rulers, and if the ruler did not submit, the church could excommunicate him and take over his lands by force. (p.79)

**C. “Erastianism teaches that the church is subservient to the state, a servant of the state, an aspect of the state and under the control and power of the state (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, (p.81)).** Erastus was a Swiss Reformer in Zwingli who lived from 1524 to 1583. The major church reformers adopted this view: Martin Luther and John Calvin. Erastian View states: *“The general government of the visible Church is part of the one function of dominion entrusted to the State...ecclesiastical censure, and more especially excommunication, is a civil punishment...which owes its force to civil authority alone.”*

**1. Martin Luther, Early 1500’s:** In actuality, Martin Luther initially believed in the Biblical view that the church and state are distinctly different, but for political expediency, he adopted the Erastian view of church and state. Martin Luther was frightened by the peasant revolt and the Anabaptist, therefore he stuck with traditionalism over scriptural truth on this matter. The Lutheran church, as late as the 1960’s was the official state church in Denmark and Finland. In England, the Church of England is a State Church. The Queen rules over this church, appointing Bishops (through the House of Lords) and ruling over worship – the Common Book of Prayer.

**2. John Calvin; a reformer in Geneva Switzerland, 1500s:** Geneva was a city-state. To be a citizen of this city-state, one had to be a baptized member of the state church. Heretics were punished by the state.

**II. SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE** (TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

