

# OCCUPY!

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## OCCUPY!: THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY

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Our Lord's command, "OCCUPY till I come," is widely neglected today by those who profess to be His servants. This command is given to us in the famous parable of the servants and the money. But what does it mean to occupy? Both the study of this word and of its context in God's word manifest its indelible meaning.

In its noun form, this word means work or doing, one's art, trade or profession; it has particularly to do with negotiations, with the affairs of life. Its verb form means particularly to do business it is synonymous with negotiations, traders, businessmen. But it is synonymous also with the activity of those charged with intellectual affairs; to occupy is to compose, to treat of, to write. The command also concerns those charged with affairs of state; to occupy is also to render political service. To occupy is to be concerned about, to pursue with vigor. Though the duty of occupation involves thought, to occupy is to act, not to engage in Platonic or Aristotelian contemplation. Our Lord did not command us to OCCUPY flowery beds of ease. The very nature of occupation involves more than business and the ordinary affairs of life; it involves action in intellectual, legal and political matters, indeed all of life.

A study of the parable in which Our Lord's command occurs elucidates with unmistakable clarity the nature of the Christian's duty in life, and hence also the fundamentals of Christian politics.

### The Story of Zaccheus

The context of the parable of the ruler, the servants and the money is an unquestionable affirmation of the sovereignty and lordship of Christ. The parable is preceded by the story of Zaccheus and followed by Jesus' affirmation of his Lordship (Luke 19:29-34).

Jesus first drew Zaccheus to Him — Zaccheus was curious "to see Jesus who he was" (Lk. 19:3) — thereby leading the sinful man to ask the fundamental question which confronts every man: "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15) Through taking the initiative to show the publican who He is and abiding with this man's family, Jesus convicted Zaccheus of sin and brought him to repentance, Zaccheus was saved and sanctified by the abiding grace of Jesus. Christian life and politics are founded on salvation and sanctification by the grace and work of the Lord.

The abiding presence of Jesus in Zaccheus' household saved not only Zaccheus but also his family. It also made them obedient to the Lord and His law. Christian life and politics must be based on the recognition of Jesus as

both Lord and Master, as Lord and Lawgiver. Zaccheus' salvation, and Christ's continued abiding with him, led to his acceptance of the first table of God's law, which in turn led to Zaccheus' renunciation of human standards of conduct in favor of obedience to God's standards. Thus he practiced godly social conduct, as set forth in the second table of the law restitution and charity. (Lk. 19:8) Conversion and sanctification should lead not to a desire to "fry away" to Heaven, but, while God sustains one's life, to a desire to restore oneself and one's family to a godly relationship with men. Zaccheus' faith was manifest in works, and his works were according to the requirements of his Lord and Savior's law.

### The Lord, the Servants and the Kingdom of God (Lk. 19:28-38)

It is in this context that Jesus unfolds the famous parable, from which we derive our title and our duty. His teaching is addressed immediately to believers, and particularly to those who believe that the kingdom of God "should immediately appear," without any work by man. Jesus' purpose is to refute this erroneous idea of His Kingdom, and to charge his believers with a comprehensive vision and duty.

Our Lord clearly tells us that there are three kinds of men: good servants, wicked servants, and the Lord's enemies. Though there are differences of degree within these kinds, there are no other categories of men.

Good servants begin by believing the Lord, by recognizing His nature, His authority, His right to rule, the authority and lawfulness of his word. The Lord commands his servants — all his servants — to occupy, to "do business," until he comes. And His good servants obey: knowing that He demands a profit on His gift to them, they do their utmost to produce an increase for Him. They do not occupy themselves with the question of the time or mode of His return, but rather with the duty of occupying for their Lord.

Good servants recognize that the property, the money, given to them by the Lord is the Lord's, not simply theirs, and that it is thus to be used as the Lord requires, not as the servant desires. Note that the owner may, within God's law's boundaries, use his property as he sees fit, that he may reap a profit where he has not personally, physically, sown, and that he may require usury on the use of the property that he has entrusted to his servants. Jesus does not condemn property or profits; rather, He affirms the goodness of both, when they are used for the Lord's purposes. Neither does He imply the Marxist notion of profit as "exploitation," nor does He suggest socialist hostility to property, profits and inequality. He gives no credence to the Aristotelian notion that

money, and hence commerce, are intrinsically bad because they are “unnaturally” based on human invention.

Rather than humanistic redistribution of wealth in terms of subjective humanistic criteria of individual “virtue,” power or “equality”, our Lord requires the allocation of property in terms of Divine Providence, Gods law, and godly dominion (Gen. 1:26-28). In private property, profits and the right of the individual to use property in godly terms, we have the essentials of a free market economy required by Jesus. In the ultimate subjection of the use of property to the judgment of the Lord, we have the standard which prevents the slothful, oppressive or hedonistic abuse of property which treatens the individual liberty derived from the right to own and control property freely. The good servant works for his Lord, not for himself, for he knows that the money and things which he possess are the Lord’s, not his own. (Lk. 19:16, 18)

The good servant occupies he obeys the Lord’s word and law. He uses the resources and abilities that the Lord has given him. And he works, he does business, in order to produce as great an increase for the Lord as he can. The Lord gets His increase through the works of His good servants.

And the Lord richly rewards his faithful servants, when he returns. Just as He requires men to give back to those whom they have wronged, so he rewards his good servants many-fold, according to their good works. Consistent with His dominion mandate, he rewards them with authority, rightful power, and material things (Lk. 19:24, 25). The good servant exercises dominion, upon the basis of faith. He works outwardly his salvation, in terms of his knowledge of the Lord’s nature, attributes, requirements, word and law. And there is no escaping the fact that this faith-grounded work, together with its rewards, are both spiritual and material. For the Lord is the creator and ruler of the material; hence the material cannot be separated from the spiritual. The Lord commands His servants to work in, with and through the material, for the coming of His Kingdom.

#### Wicked Servants

His Kingdom also contains wicked servants. These are not just neutral or indifferent servants. The wicked servant knows the Lord, that He is Lord, ruler, lawgiver. And he fears the Lord. But fear is only the beginning of wisdom, not its fullness. The wicked servant knows that he has received a gift from the Lord, and that the Lord requires him to do business, to produce an increase for his Lord. But he disobeys his Lord’s command to occupy. He is passive, not active. He produces no increase (Lk. 19:15, 20-23). He does not even invest the money in the productive enterprises of others, for fear of losing what the Lord has given him. He makes no use of the Lord’s gifts.

Consequently, the Lord judges him, upon His return. The Lord causes His gifts of money to be taken from the wicked servant and given to the good servant, to whom the Lord had already given much (Lk. 19:26). In choosing not to occupy, the wicked servant had rejected the Lord’s word and law as standard, substituting in its stead his own subjective opinion. Hence, the Lord judges the wicked servant, punishing him in terms of the wicked servant’s own arbitrary standard (cf. Matt. 7:1).

The wicked servant loses the power, authority and material rewards that the Lord had given him, and receives none of the rewards of the good servants, save two he remains a servant of the Lord, and he escapes the awful judgment and punishment which is meted out to the Lord’s enemies (Lk. 19:14, 27).

#### The Lord’s Enemies

It is important to note that the Lord’s enemies are his citizens. They are under His authority, rule, word and law. But they hate the Lord. So they willfully seek to rebel against Him, to reject and overthrow His authority, word, rule and law. They want to be a law unto themselves (Gen.3:5). So, in His absence, like our first parents, they defy Him. It is no wonder that they are not told by the Lord to occupy being fundamentally opposed to the Lord and His word, they cannot occupy, cannot do the Lord’s business.

The Lord’s enemies do not want their relationships with men to be governed by God’s law, since they have rejected the Lord’s rule. Still, they are citizens of His realm, and as such are under His law — His **civil** law— and so will be judged by its standard. As they cannot overthrow the Lord’s rule, they cannot overthrow the authority of His law as the standard for civil society. Their relative impotence, however, does ensure that their rebellion will be both judged and punished: punished by death.

#### occupy!

To occupy is to do business: God’s business. Not only in the realm of leading lost souls to Christ. Not just in the everyday affairs of life. But in **all** areas of life. The Christian’s obligation to occupy is based upon the nature, attributes and commandments of the Lord Jesus, upon His sovereignty, authority, love and law. It is necessarily founded upon His saving grace. But God’s grace does not stop at the salvation of the individual’s soul. For God also graciously provides the saved sinner with personal motivation for godly living, by abiding with him, by providing immutable standards of conduct via the revelation of His law, and by providing eternal and temporal rewards for obedience and service.

God’s word commands all men to obey His law, and commands believers to be active in serving Him, in producing the increase of God’s things. The Lord’s law applies, clearly, to all men, whether or not they desire to live under and obey that law, whether or not they desire to undertake the risks involved in serving Him. And, if we are to take the content of Jesus’ parable seriously, His law applies not only to all men individually, in their personal lives, but also to all men collectively, in their lives as citizens of a political order.

Obedient service is the very framework and content of the God-ordained duty to occupy. As such, it is also the very essence of the Kingdom of God. Obedience by all men; active service by Christian men. Obedience is required of all citizens active service is especially required of those given power and authority by the Lord (cf. Ro. 13:1 -8ff). Jesus’ parable is an instruction and mandate to rulers, as well as to citizens: God’s law is the standard of law (Matt. 5:17-21; 28:18-20, etc); rulers are to be a terror to evil works, not to good ones (Ro. 13:1-14).

Christian occupation is not passive contemplation. Neither is it mere personal holiness — although it necessitates both contemplation and personal piety. Nor is occupation minimal acquiescence, as in the case of the wicked servant. Occupation is an active, comprehensive duty. We are to produce profits for our Lord, not just to “hold the line.” Jesus does not make this duty conditional upon time or circumstance, nor upon our calculation of the imminence of His return. Those who are lax in their performance of this duty will be punished. But — thanks be to God — those who are diligent servants, using what the Lord has given them to further His Kingdom, will be greatly rewarded.

# THE NECESSITY OF A CHRISTIAN POLITICS

Archie P. Jones

If anything is more urgently needed than a spiritual revival in American civilization it is a revival of political awareness among Bible-believing Christians. Many nominal Christians are politically active. This is part of the problem: it is the theological liberals who are politically active; the theological conservatives are not. It is easy to understand the motivation of the liberals: theirs is a religion of politics, a religion of salvation via politics, for they begin with the autonomy of man.

The chief problem lies, however, with the great majority of Bible believers. The liberals act. The conservatives don't. So the tremendous godly influence that believers could exert on American Politics is lost. By default. By neglect. But worse, by neglect of the fullness of God's word.

Some Christians neglect God's word's requirements because of ignorance; some because of laziness. Others avoid God's political requirements because they reject the apostate politics of the liberals, without going to the humanistic root of the problem of liberalism. Still others avoid biblical requirements out of false view of spirituality; viewing the material as evil, they eschew political involvement or comment. All of these views are false. Moreover, they are views which dishonor God.

God is the Creator and sustainer of all things. He upholds all things by the word of His power. Nothing in His creation is outside of His providence and control. Therefore man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of the Lord.

The Greeks said that politics is the architectonic science. We should expect nothing less of humanists. But obviously they were wrong. Politics cannot be the architectonic science, for politics like all human activities, is subject to the word and plan of God. God's word applies to all things — to philosophy, to science, to ethics, to law, and to all other things, including politics.

All political questions are ultimately theological questions, because God has created all things which affect the

political sphere. Because He has created and ordained the laws which govern the political. And because He has created and providentially sustained or punished the very men whose thoughts and actions affect and constitute the political sphere. All political questions are ultimately theological questions because all human thoughts are ultimately godly or ungodly, biblical or apostate, thoughts, from which consequent actions follow.

All spheres of life — whether epistemology or physics, art or education, theology or sociology or the vocations — are intimately governed by the word of God. No area is exempt. All areas are related, since the word and plan of God is a unity. All areas are thus both under the law and control of God and related to each other. All things are thus relevant to each other. But politics is not the architectonic science. Theology is. A biblical politics is not theoretically preferable it is mandatory. Only scripture has the answers to all of man's intellectual and practical problems. Humanism does not and cannot. Nor can that humanism which is liberal theology provide the answers. We needn't delineate the problems facing American and Western Civilization: their symptoms are obvious. But to the Christian it is also manifest that their roots lie in man's apostasy.

It should also be obvious to the Christian that the word of God need not be diluted or supplemented by the word of man. Furthermore, the believer may not add to or take away from God's word (Rev. 22:18, 19). And the believer has a God-ordained duty to have dominion, under God, over all the earth (Gen. 1:26-28), to occupy for Christ, till He comes (Luke 19:13). The Lord is glorified by godly thought and activity. A Christian politics is an important component of such activity, and is related to other spheres of godly activity. It is a crucial aspect of the Christian's calling and duty. It is needed by America and the world. Most importantly, it is required by our Lord and Saviour.

## THE INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

by Mark Elam

Early in the life of our nation, even prior to the adoption of the U. S. Constitution, "public land was generally perceived to be owned by the government, and as early as 1785 was offered for sale by government to the public. Under the Ordinance of 1785, which was largely the work of Thomas Jefferson, a land survey system was established and land was offered for sale at a minimum price of \$1 per acre. The land was offered for sale at public auction, the only catch being that the auction was held only in New York City, the nation's capitol at the time.

Initially it was hoped that land sales would finance the costs of operating the federal government, however, this quickly proved to be little more than wishful thinking. The government in its infinite wisdom proceeded to flood the market with land for which there were no buyers, and offered the land for sale only in minimum quantities too large to be affordable or practical for farming at the time. Recognizing that there were problems involved in the terms of sale which

were discouraging sale of public lands, the government decided that it would confront the problem head on and proceed to double the minimum price of land in 1796.

Over the next century the government made numerous changes in public land sales policies, some of which actually facilitated the sale or "disposal" of public lands. Despite these changes, and despite the fact that some land was given free under the Homestead Acts and in payment for military service, one central idea permeated the thoughts and actions of those who directed our government: this being that government was the owner and proper distributor of the public lands. Land was not simply held in trust by the government, but was owned and controlled by it. The memory of English violation of what the founding fathers referred to as the inalienable rights of life, liberty and property helped to minimize potential restrictions upon private ownership of property; nonetheless, government ownership of the public lands was still the predominant view. This view was evidenced by government

sale of the public lands, government control over the terms of sale, and the government claim to the power of eminent domain.

There were some who departed from this view however. One of the few notable exceptions was Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who, among other things, was championed as a defender of squatters' rights. The squatters in this instance were not squatters on privately held property, but rather, pioneers who settled the public lands prior to their being surveyed and offered for sale. Benton held that land rightfully belonged to the people and was only held in trust by government until such time as it could be settled or productively used.

While Benton's views were not widely held by lawmakers at the time, they did represent an important concept in relation to Biblical teaching regarding the private ownership of land. Benton's view of land ownership and his sympathy for these so-called squatters was important not only because it emphasized the value of land to the individual but also because it recognized that property rights are derived from a source other than the state. Benton's view further recognized the value of labor, itself a form of property. The labor of the squatters, represented by the settlement and improvement of these frontier lands, correspond with the Biblical commandment to have 'dominion' over the land, and served as a form of payment for the land.

Biblically (as opposed to the humanistic "sovereignty" view of government) man does not own the earth, but rather holds it in trust as a "trustee to God". The right of private ownership of land, including the right to exclude others from its use, is reaffirmed on numerous occasions in scripture. The commandments "thou shall not steal" and "thou shall not covet", implicitly affirm the right of private ownership. It is difficult to square this fact with the claims of men such as Leo Tolstoy, an anarchist who professed Christianity and yet rejected private ownership. It is apparent to most individuals (if not to Tolstoy) that private ownership necessarily precedes the possibility of theft and covetousness. If nothing is owned, then covetousness and theft are impossible. Christ himself reaffirmed not only private ownership but also the rights of exclusivity and transferability when he said, "IS it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (Mat. 20:15) Private property ownership is an inheritance of God's law. The importance of private ownership and inheritance to the existence of the family can easily be seen in studying scripture. It is important therefore to consider the role which government plays in relation to property rights. If it is the state which has sovereignty over the land, then man serves as a trustee to the state rather than to God, and the potential for the limitation or denial of property rights is increased.

Government-created inflation is a critical modern day example of government violation, rather than protection, of property rights. By reducing the value of money through inflation, governments effectively steal property from their citizens, who have their purchasing power reduced by the amount of government debasement of the currency. Government ownership and control of a nation's money, as does government ownership of a nation's land, represents a tremendous potential for the abuse of individual property rights, for the violation of the biblical prohibition of theft. Unhappily, our federal government continues to provide us with abundant and painful examples of theft via both massive inflation of the currency and gargantuan legislative land grabs. We should expect little else of a lawless humanistic state governed by fallen and rebellious men.

For man to exercise economic and ultimately political freedom it is necessary that he be free to privately own and control property. As Madison points out in Federalist No. 10, property, humanly speaking, derives from the individual's use of his faculties, his mind, and property in its fullest sense includes ideas and beliefs as well as material things. Madison does not make it clear that property ultimately derives from the triune Creator, but Madison's desire to protect both material and non-material property against individual, group or governmental theft and destruction is essentially biblical in its refusal to distinguish between a man's thoughts and his actions, and in its desire to protect the material fruits of a man's just thoughts.

Protection of a man's property is essential to the preservation of his liberty under God. Thought is necessary to acquire and retain property, and control over one's property is the essential attribute of ownership. To the extent that the state usurps this right of private ownership (via expropriation or eminent domain) or restricts the ability of men to control their property (via property taxes, rent controls, and other regulations), it not only reduces economic freedom but also impinges upon the right and ability of individuals to prosper and to utilize their property for the glory of God.

The proper role of government in relation to property is necessarily limited to protecting the right of property ownership and use by individuals. The use of property is not unlimited, for God's law places certain limits on the uses which one can make of his property (murder and injury and theft are obvious examples). But the biblical role of government in relation to property is ordered by the fact that it is not the state, but God who ultimately owns the land and other property of men. And it is individual men who inherit property from God, together with the responsibility to exercise dominion over and replenish the earth, in order to prosper from the blessings of its godly use, and to glorify God—not the state.

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