

Why would a Christian not vote?

The answer is difficult because it is complex although it can really be boiled down to the following:

One can't have one allegiance to one person and also demonstrate a competing allegiance to another. We believe that the rightful ruler of the world is the Man Jesus Christ who is also God. So while we will not rebel against any ruler that comes into power in this world, we do not support any of their claims of right to power before the fact.

That is, once they are in power, we accept that God Himself has put them there albeit not to be obeyed unconditionally. Until they are, we don't care about any arguments they have about their right to rule: They have none in our worldview.

Here is the complexity:

- If they have no right to rule, how do we explain their becoming rulers seemingly with God's endorsement?
- How would communities exist without some form of government if Jesus is back in Heaven rather than here? That is, how are we not being irresponsible when we refuse to participate in these mechanisms we use to form governments to manage community life?
- How is it demonstrating a competing allegiance to vote for someone to rule anywhere on earth? That is, if Jesus is King of kings, is He not still the King of these rulers even if we vote them into office? How does it affect my allegiance to Him if I vote for anyone to be my local government chairman or city mayor etc?
- When I'm not voting or engaging politically, what am I doing as a member of my community? Am I living under a rock? Do I become a hermit of some sort? What does a Christian do with his life?

Let's take them in order.

If they have no right to rule, how do we explain their becoming rulers seemingly with God's endorsement?

To this first question, the Bible answers,

16 The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.
Psalms 115:16 (NASB)

That is, the earth is under the purview of humankind's individual and collective choices. God takes the place of an umpire in those choices to ensure that everybody gets what He has commanded for them as human beings in the world. This is also why Satan has no direct influence on the earth. In order to accomplish his will, he has to find human beings who will agree to mediate it for him on the earth. Without the buy-in of human beings, Satan has no permission from God to act upon the earth.

So, if a sufficient number of the human community decides to head in a direction that concurs with a general principle that God has instituted, then He will ratify their decision. For example, although God never stated explicitly whether democratically elected governments or monarchic dynasties or despotism or republicanism is the right style of government, He most certainly instituted a principle of community oversight for the preservation of human free will in Genesis 9:5-6. That is, every human being is responsible to God for the preservation of human life and free will in the community. Therefore, if a sufficient number of people in the community decides to exercise that responsibility (consciously or not, it makes no difference) by instituting some form of government and concentrating power in one or more individuals to carry out that collective responsibility, God ratifies their choice to do so, but still holds them responsible for how that works out for them. It is entirely within their right as creatures possessing a free will to decide how to conduct themselves, but they are not free of the consequences of such choices in the sight of the Lord.

Here is the catch: Humankind is not a spiritually homogeneous species. The spiritual allegiances of the individuals that make up human communities are divided and in conflict. Although there appear to be several different allegiances, there are in fact just two. For example, atheists might feel that they don't believe in a Satan any more than they believe in a God, but that does not matter really since any failure to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ as true is really a vote for Satan no matter what the alternative is that the given unbeliever prefers. This spiritual heterogeneity means that human beings don't generally agree on how they will discharge their responsibility to each other or even if they will. So what does God ratify exactly?

We did say that God ratifies what a sufficient number of people do in agreement with His established conditions or principles of life in this world, but what is a sufficient number? That is not a very easy question to answer. An answer that may be naturally expected is the majority, but Gen. 11:1-9 seems rather obvious in its rejection of that idea. If it's not the majority then, it can hardly be the minority. The answer then is that it's less a question of how many and more one of what they are agreeing to do as a community of more than one person. As we have said too, what

they are agreeing to do has to agree with God's established principles of life in this world. What then does that mean?

We have already demonstrated an answer to that a few paragraphs above. It is God's will that the human community preserves human life from unjust attacks because the human being exists in the image of God, a statement that refers to human possession of free will. Now, how the human community may do that is an open question for all human beings. If I have a duty to God to preserve the life of the man next to me from unjust attacks so that he can exercise his free will toward God, and he has a duty to God to preserve mine too in the same way, how we will do it for each other is something we might choose to work out together or that we can individually implement according to our chosen philosophies of life. Since we are almost certain to have differing ideas on who God is and what He really wants, chances are that we will come to differing — maybe even conflicting — ideas about how to take care of each other. If, however, we can compromise on the need to preserve each other's life from unjustified attacks for whatever reason we might want, whatever we set up as a system to ensure that preservation will be ratified by God since it still works within His wishes for humankind. It may not be a perfect system (in fact, it certainly won't be) and it may have some unfortunate side effects on our free will, but if it does preserve life from criminal attacks, we would now be responsible before God to respect it.

Thus, man's right to decide how life functions on earth per Ps. 115:16 leads to the ratification of even poor choices that man makes as long as those choices serve God's stated principles about how the earth must be administered.

This is what Daniel 4:17,25-26 speaks to as well. Human beings are very largely in rebellion against God, but that does not mean that God has no more rights on earth. He still does. So, He does act through and despite the choices of His rebellious creatures. When they choose to act in a given way and their choice is in keeping with His wishes for the earth that He has entrusted to them, He ratifies it. If they choose to act in another and their choice opposed Him, He frustrates their endeavors just like He did at Babel.

Therefore, even though God recognizes that human beings are in rebellion against Him (Ps. 2:1-2; 14:1-3) and even though because of it, He is under no obligation anymore to leave His Earth in their hands to rule (1 Samuel 2:30; cf. 1 Sam. 15:26) and even though He has chosen a ruler from among men to whom He has given the right to rule over all His creation (Ps. 2:1-6; Isaiah 42:1-9, cf. 9:6-7; Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:5-11), He still reserves the right to endorse the authority of those who rise to the top in human communities and use them as His deputies to rule over those in those communities (Dan. 4:17,25-26; Rom. 13:1-2,4,6). That is, He reserves the right to endorse them as rulers in keeping

with His word that human communities are responsible to preserve human life in this world even though He holds such rulers as usurpers of His chosen Ruler's right to rule over the Earth since they almost invariably an allegiance to His enemy. This is the gist of Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

Well, then, if God still endorses these rulers that come to power in any number of ways and if He ratifies the choices of the human beings involved in this matter, shouldn't believers take advantage of that to ensure that only good people rise to the top? Isn't that the responsible thing to do? This is really just a token question because it ignores the fundamental point that human beings are largely in rebellion against God and are setting up their own systems as an alternative to God rather than in submission to Him (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7). In other words, God is not honoring their choice to have their own rulers separate from Him. He is only using their own choices to accomplish His purposes. So, if they make a ruler — regardless of how they do so — He uses that ruler to accomplish His purpose of preserving human life for the purpose of making free will choices about Him. This is why He even endorses evil rulers since sometimes He uses them to destroy communities that have become enemies of that exercise of free will (Zechariah 11:16, for example, cf. the context).

The believer does not then have any responsibility to participate in the activities that humankind gets up to in order to make rulers. He already has his own Ruler in Jesus Christ and sees himself as an alien in a world that is in active rebellion against his Ruler. It would be rather inappropriate, then, for him to also give his backing to anyone who wishes to exercise power in such a system or even to seek power in such a system.

Following on from our discussions above, it should be obvious that the fact that a believer stays out of the mechanisms that seek to decide who becomes ruler and how they do does not mean that he has no responsibility to obey such a ruler when they have gained power. In fact, this is what the Bible teaches: that he does in fact. But we can see that that responsibility is less to the person who is ruling and more to the God who has endorsed his authority. Since the believer recognizes God's right to command us to look out for each other's right to exercise our free will here on earth, he will find it natural to uphold the authority of any ruler that God has instituted for that purpose. So he will obey the laws made by the ruler that are in keeping with his responsibility to preserve human life for the exercise of free will toward God. This is what belongs to Caesar.

In short then, God is only accommodating the world in its preferences for how to preserve human life for the exercise of free will in response to His divine authority when He backs up the authority of rulers in this world. He is not saying at all that they are His chosen rulers. His chosen Ruler is Jesus Christ. Therefore, not only

does the believer have no responsibility to vote or engage in any activity that produces rulers in this world, but there is also a real issue of what doing so means for his allegiance to the rulership of Jesus Christ whom God has made ruler of all His creation and against whom the rulers of the world tend to act because of their preference for Satan's ideas.

We turn our attention now to the second question.

How would communities exist without some form of government if Jesus is back in Heaven rather than here? That is, how are we not being irresponsible when we refuse to participate in these mechanisms we use to form governments to manage community life?

Another way that some might frame this question is: *"If everyone abstained from politics, wouldn't that just hand everything over to evil people?"* A quick and obvious answer to that is that if everyone did, then no evil people would remain to take over everything. Maybe in another thought or two, we would see that the question assumes that there are good people and evil people whereas the Bible does not see any such dichotomy: It holds that everyone is evil. That does say something for whether this activity of choosing rulers is as good as the question seems to suppose since it is presented as a way to preserve the community from evil rulers. These are quick considerations that shouldn't be difficult to appreciate. Still, the question is presented in a more sophisticated form above, so it is worth exploring.

Since Jesus is not down here on earth to rule over the world, how are communities preserved from evil if believers choose to disengage from the political process? Since we have posited that the world is largely in rebellion against God since the vast majority of human beings is in league with Satan, it seems to only make sense that those who are on God's side should make sure to have a say in who rules our communities and even take charge of the process if possible so that "God's will may be done." So if believers are not to do so, how are communities preserved from evil?

We have already seen that God uses the activities of human beings and their choices, even the very ones that are rebellious, to bring about the things that He wants. If they want a ruler, He uses their activities that are carried out toward getting one to give them those that He wants them to have. Then, He holds them responsible to obey that ruler. This is one way that He preserves the human community from destroying itself.

Connected to that is Proverbs 21:1. According to the Bible, rulers have a different spiritual experience from the common folk. Since they have concentrated in their

hands the legitimate and divine power and responsibility that all members of their community have to carry out vengeance against murderers and all those who oppose the exercise of free will in response to God's divine authority, their hearts present a much more dramatic battleground between God and Satan than anyone else's. An excellent demonstration of this is in Dan. 10:12-13, 20-11:1. Here, a high-ranking angel (although apparently lower than an archangel since it took one — Michael — to free him from the opposition of Satan's "prince" of Persia and the detention of Satan's "kings" of Persia) who says that he "stood up to strengthen [Darius]" was opposed and delayed for 21 days in his journey to bring God's answer to Daniel. This is telling since we have one prince on Satan's side and an unspecified number of kings also on Satan's side who were associated with Persia of which Darius was one of the rulers. Darius was the governor of the Babylonian provinces under Cyrus's rule over the Persian empire. It should be beyond obvious that any number of human princes and kings could do nothing to stop an angelic envoy from carrying out his divine duties. We only have to think of how one angel dispatched 185,000 soldiers, leaders, and captains in the army besieging Jerusalem in 2 Kings 19, 1 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 37. Or how one angel killed 70,000 Israelites in 2 Sam. 24 and 1 Chr 21. There are more examples of angelic power in the Bible than those. Suffice it to say that it could only be rival angels who could do anything to stop this angel from coming through. So, the prince and kings of Persia there were other angels that maintained satanic spiritual influence over Persia. This elect angel speaking with Daniel then was essentially contesting with them over Darius certainly because of Daniel and other believers that Darius had authority over.

It is worthy of note that Darius was favorably disposed to Daniel even if we might not say that he became a believer like Nebuchadnezzar did who was himself a worthy example in our discussion. This favorable disposition may be a reason for or a result of the angelic support that he received from this angel or some mix of both. We should easily see how Pro. 21:1 is playing out here. We also have an entire book in the Bible that demonstrates how God worked a monarch around to not only preserve the lives of His people but also to elevate them. That is the book of Esther. We also have what God did to Pharaoh to persuade him not only to free the people of Israel but to in fact enrich them while ejecting them from Egypt. There is also Cyrus whose universal decree sending all captives of the Babylonian empire back to their various homelands began the return of Israelites to their ancestral home. The Bible has so many examples of rulers whose hearts were constantly turned toward the good of God's people.

How did these kings who ended up serving God's wishes become rulers? Sometimes it was intrigue; sometimes it was war; sometimes, it was some form of democratic process; or it might have been inheritance of a throne from a father. It really made

no difference. When the person became a ruler, God had him or her serve His wishes for the world. At no point do we see that God needed or used His people to effect political change. This is also why the Bible tells us to turn to the Lord for protection in the world rather than engaging in political issues to effect our own protection (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The exceptions to this occur in God's own nation of Israel, which was a unique country in itself. The way things obtained in Israel was meant just for Israel, not for Gentile nations that God did not claim as His own. We may note too that it was not God's wish for them to have kings, but He granted it to them when they demanded one. Then, as we see with the rest of the world, He used their palace coups, rights of inheritance, and wars to install rulers that He wanted in place. He used this in the Northern Kingdom exceptionally when it split from Jerusalem as a form of spiritual discipline for them. It ultimately resulted in the destruction of that nation.

We conclude then that there is no biblical mandate that a believer needs to engage politically with the world in any way to realize God's wishes in the world. Rather, we see that God acts on behalf of believers in the world through political activities that are carried out by unbelievers.

We come then to the third question:

How is it demonstrating a competing allegiance to vote for someone to rule anywhere on earth? That is, if Jesus is King of kings, is He not still the King of these rulers even if we vote them into office? How does it affect my allegiance to Him if I vote for anyone to be my local government chairman or city mayor etc?

By now, any reader should have seen the answer to this. We will reiterate it anyway.

God made human beings His deputies or stewards for the planet Earth. That is, mankind's job was to administer the Earth on His behalf. By listening to Satan, mankind really is committing treason against their rightful King. They are essentially handing over this part of His Kingdom to His enemy. That is what the majority of the human race has been doing since Adam and Eve. Believers since that time as well have essentially said no to that betrayal and have accepted reconciliation with the God that we betrayed (Colossians 1:13-14). We no longer want to listen to Satan or participate in his schemes, so we only engage with the systems of this world to the degree that we can do so without violating our restored allegiance to the rightful King.

The trouble is that these systems are largely built by those who hate God and prefer the rule of His enemy (cf. Gen. 11:1-4). This is not difficult to understand

since they are the overwhelming majority. Very few people indeed are believers (Matt. 7:14, cf. Ecc. 7:28). This is why the Bible presents this world as Satan's world:

30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.
John 14:30 (NKJV)

19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
1 John 5:19 (NASB)

If, then, the world pretends that Jesus is not King, should we join them in that pretense? Obviously not. We may wish for the world to be better and therefore assume that because the Bible tells us that we are salt and light and witnesses for the Lord, we must somehow attempt to use the world's systems to change the nature of the world. But this is not only incredibly naive (as should be evident just in the statement itself), it is also dangerous since it both fails at what it sets out to do and draws us into the very thing that we had declared ourselves against. Even if a believer were seeking to take power to rule over some part of the world so that they may change the wicked practices of that place, to support them is to choose against waiting for the time of Jesus's return to fix the world Himself.

How so since we are to be salt and light and witnesses to Christ?

We are salt in the sense that salt is a preservative. To the extent that the world treats us well or at least leaves us alone, to that extent, God blesses the world (Gen. 12:3). To the extent, on the other hand, that the world treats us poorly especially to the extent of murdering us, to that extent the world is no longer safe from God's anger. That is how we act as salt.

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.
Matthew 5:13 (NASB)

One might complain that this verse says nothing about preservation and everything about taste. That is true, but it is hard to find something rotten tasty, so the point still stands. Besides that, Jesus was speaking to a generation that used salt to preserve everything since spices and wine (the other alternatives) were more expensive and sometimes just not right for what you wanted. They certainly did not have refrigerators and freezers then either. So, if delicacies were going to remain edible and desirable, salt was going to be needed.

As for light, the Bible calls this world the domain or the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13; Eph 6:12). It talks about how Satan has blinded unbelievers so that they cannot see the truth of the Gospel and be saved (2 Cor. 4:4). What would people groping about in search of salvation need? The answer to that is light. In other words, something about believers is supposed to tell the seeking unbeliever that Christ is what they are looking for. What would that be? It would be our conduct:

12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:12 (NKJV)

An excellent discussion of this is the following:

11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the **armor of light**. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Romans 13:11-14 (NKJV)

If we line that up against the following, we get amazing insight into what the Lord wants us to think of when we think of ourselves as light:

9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; 11 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (NKJV)

All of these passages refer to how we conduct ourselves among the people of this world. If we eschew or avoid the things that the people of this world think are normal and "fun" but are actually injurious to ourselves, we are shining among them like stars (Phil. 2:15). If we go even further, as above, to do our job of

spiritual growth and production for the Lord, we are that much more brilliant demonstrating to them what the salvation that God offers to all in Jesus Christ really looks like. In fact, the part about aspiring to a quiet life and minding our own business (a very loud Scriptural attack on political involvement among other things) stands firmly against any notion of fixing the world before the Lord Jesus returns because you can hardly do that by minding your own particular affairs or leading a quiet life.

What about the part about being a witness to Christ? What does a witness do? A witness attests to events that they were privy to. A witness reports on the character of a person that they can speak authoritatively about. In other words, a witness is someone who offers their testimony in words to uphold the truth about a thing or a person. If, then, we are witnesses to Christ, what exactly are we saying about Him by participating in political activity, by demonstrating support for any candidate to rule over us or anyone? Are we attesting to Christ's claims about Himself when we do so or are we attesting to His trustworthiness when we do so? Who or what are we testifying about with our voting?

Does the Bible not hold that the truth about Jesus Christ that the world needs to hear is that He is God who became Man and died on the Cross for our sins and was raised for our justification? Does voting somehow say any of that? Does voting, in fact, not make the matters that political angst extols the most important concerns of our lives and times?

One may argue that what we vote about and who we choose to support are all testimonies about Jesus Christ if we are expressing support or opposition to something that the Bible stands for or against respectively. For example, there is all the furor about abortion in the West. If we vote for candidates who will outlaw it, are we not then demonstrating to the world that this is what Salvation looks like? Are we not then showing them who Christ is and what pleases God? One may even add that this would be consistent with our duties as our brother's avenger as God commands us in Gen. 9:5. Are these not potent arguments?

It is true that one who is in Christ would not abort a baby or support the destruction of one in the womb. It is true that salvation looks like that indeed. It is true that we are being our brother's avenger if we can save the life of the unborn. Here is where things go off the rails: when we undertake to do things that are no longer ours to do. When we attempt to change laws or make laws or institute authorities that will do these things, we demonstrate an impatience with the Lord Himself "whom Heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:20-21). Is that what salvation looks like? Does it look like impatience with God? Does it look like support for men who claim or pretend to be worthy of rights

that God has denied all men except the One that He has chosen who is currently seated at His right hand (cf. Jer. 17:5)?

Would we not do a better job just never aborting a baby and never offering advice to that effect to anyone or supporting it in any form no matter what the law says or who is ruling? In fact, if we are living by the Bible, would we not be quietly staying out of the public eye in these things and still living in this stellar way that would tell anyone who wants to know that it is the right way to live? Why do we have to vote to accomplish all of that?

As to the matter of being our brother's avenger, if the world has elected to outsource that responsibility to a government and God has ratified it, then our job is merely to refuse to go along with Caesar's ungodly policies and support all policies he makes that are good and honorable. It is not to decide who will be Caesar and who won't be because, after all, our King is Jesus Christ, not Caesar. For all the wickedness that Caesar permits or encourages in the land, it is not us who will answer, it is Caesar and those who agree with him. For those who suffer such gross injustices and wickedness, it is not us who will repay but our God, the God of all flesh. Our own job is clear: to know the Lord and help others who are willing to know Him too.

That brings us then to the final question.

When I'm not voting or engaging politically, what am I doing as a member of my community? Am I living under a rock? Do I become a hermit of some sort? What does a Christian do with his life?

Does knowing the Lord and helping others to do the same mean that our lives are restricted to Bible-reading and praying and hiding away from the world? Not even a little bit.

It is in this world, in the midst of all its troubles, challenges, and temptations that we prove our love for the Lord by the choices we make. The fact that we don't participate in political activities does not mean that we have no use for political happenings. Our job is to grow in our knowledge of God and help others to do the same, but this is more than just reading the Bible and "preaching." It constitutes following Bible teaching closely and making everyday choices guided by it. So, for example, we still have to play our part in keeping our communities safe for the exercise of free will toward God. That is something that we learn from the Bible that we have to practice in the world. If we don't care about what goes on politically, we will not see the opportunities that political events open up for us to act in ways that please God or discover the dangers that crop up that would make living for the Lord impossible in our communities. Per our example above, if new political changes result in laws or repeals or institutional changes that encourage crime, then we

might be well advised to relocate if we can. If we don't care to watch, we might not catch wind of such an event in time to respond appropriately (cf. Pro. 22:3).

In other words, we look out for how political shifts might open opportunities for us that would contribute to our spiritual growth and production or how they might pose a danger to these things and use those to inform our decisions for the Lord.

It is also not impossible that our behavior in our communities might result in a chain of events that may improve things for our communities politically. Daniel and his friends are an example of this just as Esther and Mordecai are too. We should certainly not hold our breath for such a thing because this world is vile and its hatred for the Lord is more than just skin deep. But it is still possible that things may turn out that way simply because we play a reasonable part in our communities fulfilling godly responsibilities including but not limited to paying our taxes and reporting crime where it is safe to do so. Even in private conversations with neighbors, our appreciation of issues in our communities could open opportunities for evangelism to the unbelieving ones or start preparing their hearts for it.

In short, we must still live in the world even if we refuse to play by its rebellious rules.

In conclusion, not only do we not need to vote or participate in political activities in this world, but we are best served to stay out of them entirely in order to please God. We ***can*** live in this world and honor the Lord with our lives without political activity or any sort of legitimate need to get caught up in political angst. The Lord ***is*** coming soon. He is coming with His rewards. He is coming to avenge. He is coming to fix the world and make it good again. We can afford to wait and so can everyone else.