

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 5:6
Lesson #21
Christian civic duty
07/25/2021

**We are baptized into a spiritual world
 but live in a material world as ambassadors.**

1 Peter 1:1

"To those who reside as aliens . . . chosen of God"

The challenge of alien living



Residents of the
World of
humanity

Residents of the
United States
of America

Citizens of the
Kingdom
of God

"Image bearers"

"In Christ"

1

James Kingdom Living in a Broken World

This is what we
should know

Life's trials
contain
hidden
blessings.

1:1-18

Transition verse

**James
1:19**

This is what we should do

"quick to hear"
"Listen up"

1:19-2:13

"slow to speak"
"Shut up"

2:14-3:12

"slow to anger"
"Cool it"

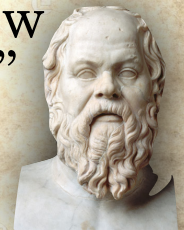
3:13-5:20

Worldly wealth and power are
spiritual liabilities **until we loosen**
our attachment to (or with) them.

2

"If a man is proud of
his wealth, he should
not be praised until
it is known how
he employs it."

Socrates



3

1 Timothy 6

"¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this
present world **not to be conceited or
to fix their hope on** the uncertainty of
riches, but on God, who richly supplies
us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct
them to do good, to be rich in good
works, to **be generous and ready to
share**, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the
treasure of a good foundation for the
future, so that they may take hold of
that which is life indeed."

4

"Nearly all men can
stand adversity, but if
you want to test a man's
character, give
him power and
wealth or take
it from him."

Abraham Lincoln



5

Mark 4

“18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 and the worries of the world, and the **deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**”

Wealth & power can sabotage (blind us to) God's kingdom and people.

6

James 5:1-6 (LAST WEEK) The negative side effects of wealth & power

- Blinding us to any negative side effects.
- Blinding us to the limited value of wealth.
- Blinding us to the communal nature of wealth.
- Blinding us to the role of poverty in life.
- Blinding us to the Way of the Cross.



- Blinding those of us who have it, to the way we shape **OUR** culture.

7

James 5

“6 You have **condemned and put to death** (murdered) **the righteous man**; he does not resist you.”

The “rich” can intentionally or unintentionally **discriminate against** those who are powerless.

The rich and powerful tend to **set the rules, keep the score, and tell the story of the (THEIR) culture and in their favor.**

Proverbs 11:1

“A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.”

8

Dealing with civil social issues.

1. Respect the separation of church and state.

“rendering
to Caesar”

Deal with a
secular state
on the common base
of a shared
“**image of God**”.

This calls for
“**peacemaking**”
and “**tolerance**”.

“rendering
to God”

Deal with the
Body of Christ
on the common base
of a shared
faith “**in Christ**”.

This calls for
“**kingdom building**”
and “**holiness**”.

9

Dealing with civil social issues.

1. Respect the separation of church and state.
2. Do not think of America as God's embassy in this world.
3. Listen to the emphasis of Scripture.

- The **O.T.** social ethics are centered on the dynamics **WITHIN Judaism**.
In Ancient Israel, church and state were one.
The emphasis was on care for the poor, vulnerable, and sojourners.

10

- The **RULES** differed in relating to those outside the faith community. Lev.25:39-46
Canaanite slaves were treated as slaves.
Hebrew slaves were treated as servants.
- The **N.T.** social ethical teaching is focused on the dynamics **WITHIN the church**.
- The **EXPECTATIONS** differed in relating to those outside the faith community.
1 Cor.5:9-13
 - **Keeping peace** was a priority.
 - Witnessing to the kingdom was to be by **example** through the church, not by reforming the state.

11

Dealing with civil social issues.

1. Respect the separation of church and state.
2. Do not think of America as God's embassy in this world.
3. Listen to the emphasis of Scripture.
4. Seek holiness in the church, and peace in the world.
5. Don't misplace your faith, hope, & love in America, politics, or the spirit of this age.

12

What is the common ground of American civil law?



13

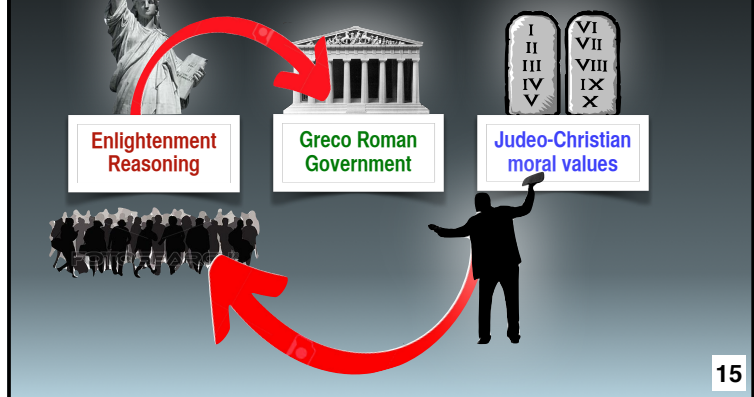
“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness: — That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, **deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the governed;**”

The Declaration of Independence

If the USA derives its powers from heaven it is only through its citizens.

14

Protocol for moral legislation



15

“Senator, when you took your oath of office, you placed your hand on the Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution. You didn't place your hand on the Constitution and swear to uphold the Bible.”

Jamie Raskin

(law professor American Univ.)



16

“When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of being a bad one.”

Benjamin Franklin



17

We Render to American Caesar when:

*We respect (listen to & learn from)
citizens who differ with us.*

*"Our nation's greatness
lies in its unified diversity."*

*We don't demonize as enemies fellow
citizens who politically disagree with us.
We work together with them.*

Matthew 5:9

*"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God."*

18

Dealing with Systemic Racism

1. Address the root problem as disrespect and exclusion, not just economic.
2. Recognize that those in power tend to set the rules, keep the score, and tell the story.
3. Address the wealth / power gap with mercy, not just free market dynamics.
4. Don't confuse & dismiss racial injustice with "critical race theory".
5. Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to fear and blame.

19

*Signs we are going in
the right direction.*

James 3

"17 But the wisdom from above is first **pure**, then **peaceable**, **gentle**, **reasonable**, full of **mercy** and **good fruits**, **unwavering**, **without hypocrisy**. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in **peace** by those who **make peace**."

20

*Be peacemakers (tolerant
and respectful) in civic life.*

Matthew 5:9

*"Blessed are the **peacemakers**,
for they shall be called sons of God."*

1 Timothy 2

*"1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, **in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity**."*

21

Tension is built into our system of Government.



*We see community as a bigger calling
than just defeating our political rivals.*

22

Philippians 2

*"5 Have this **attitude** in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who although He existed in the form of God, **did not regard** equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but **emptied** Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men 8. . . He **humbled** Himself by becoming **obedient** to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

23