

What Is the Position of a True Believer in Regard to the Nations?

by H.J. Vine

A true believer's position is threefold: above the nations as being 'in Christ', interceding for their rulers as being of God's house, and subject to their authority as one of God's people.

Scripture: John 18:36, Romans 13:1, 1 Timothy 2:1, Revelation 5:10

Topics: "Christian Citizenship", "Prayer Intercession"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the threefold position of the believer in relation to the nations: 1. In Christ, the believer is above the nations, destined to share in Christ's future reign. 2. As part of God's house, the believer intercedes for rulers, praying for all nations. 3. As one of God's people, the believer is subject to national authorities, awaiting the return of Christ from heaven.

Transcript

The position in which God has set the believer is a threefold one; or, more correctly-speaking, he is set in three distinct positions as to the nations.

1. As being "in Christ," he is above them.
2. As being of God's house, he intercedes for their rulers.
3. As one of God's people, he is subject to their authority, which is "set up of God" (Rom. 13:1, N.Tr.).

A word of explanation as to these three important positions may be helpful.

1. In Christ

Having redeemed us by the blood of Christ, God has blessed us in Christ, whom He has set over all things, according to His purpose; and we are destined to share in His future reign over the nations. We shall reign "over the earth" (Rev. 5:10, N.Tr.). The position of Christ determines the position of those who are in Him. Having borne our judgment upon the cross, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to the place of supremacy. We are blessed in Christ where He is, according to God's purpose; and though the public reign of Christ over the nations is future, yet the Spirit of truth enables the believer to enter into the fact now, and to rejoice in it. It is in this sense, as being in Christ, that he is above the nations. Thence

he has a higher glory than theirs to seek, even the glory of Christ.

2. Of the House of God

The church, or, more correctly, the assembly, is the house of God. It is established in the Lord as a habitation for God in the Spirit here upon earth. In Christ the believer's position is above the earth: in the house of God his position is upon the earth. It is here he intercedes for the rulers of the nations. This position is little understood. The erroneous idea that buildings of brick and stone and wood are houses of God is very common. Many minds are terribly clouded by this idea. The truth is, there is only one house of God upon earth, and it is a house of prayer for all men. It is made up of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's people of old, Israel, had one house in their midst--the temple. The house of God of which we speak now answers to that. When the house is restored to Israel, God says He will make them joyful in His house of prayer (Isa. 56:7); and all shall be at liberty to pray there, for He continues, "Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." The difference as to the house of God now is that we pray for all: in the future day all nations will be able to pray there themselves. We now pray for the kings and rulers of the nations (1 Tim. 2:1), that we who belong to God's house may honour Him in "a quiet and tranquil life in all piety and gravity" (N.Tr.), though others may be engaged in ungodly strife.

Believers are a spiritual house, and in this sense are above all nationalities, and so pray not for one king merely but for "kings" and for all men. There are no separate or conflicting national interests in the house of God. There are brethren beloved who belong to it in other nations than the one we may be immediately connected with. Did we not therefore pray aright, we might be found praying in opposition to our brethren whose lot was cast in another nation. Then it would be a house divided against itself. The truth is, Christ's interests are our interests; and as we pray in view of the welfare of all who are His everywhere, we know that this is a very great help in regard to all men everywhere. The position of the believer is therefore that of an intercessor for all the rulers of the nations.

3. As One of God's People

In the ways of God on earth, as to outward advantage, Christendom is in the place of Israel. We are grafted into the olive tree (Rom. 11); and when Israel turns to the Lord again apostate Christendom will be cast off. Now, as being one of God's people, standing in a present favoured position, the believer is told to be subject to the national authorities (Rom. 13:1). It is in this sense that the name "the people of God," which properly belongs to Israel, is two or three times applied to us. But again there is a contrast between Israel and ourselves, that, whereas they rightly sought and prayed for national power and pre-eminence over other nations, we do not strive thus; but quietly and peacefully accept the place of subjection to the ruling power, in whatever land we live, while we await the coming of God's Son from heaven. It is just in this earthly position that we are spoken of as "the people of God", otherwise we are saints by the call of God, brethren of the risen Christ and children of God as begotten of Him. Not seeing these distinctions the Romanists and others seek to gain and exercise authority over the nations now, and so have become Babylonish and unfaithful to the rejected Bridegroom of the assembly. The public rule of our blessed Lord is yet future, as we have said; therefore rule is yet future for us also. His present position determines ours, as He said to the Father, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world."

When our Lord stood before Pilate He meekly accepted, and bowed to, the authority which was divinely given to the Roman representative. What a sight! The King of Israel, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, yea, the Son of God receives an unjust sentence without resisting the authority that then was! How

becoming then it is that the believer who follows Him now should be subject to the powers that be.

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