

# Lesson 6: Strangers and Pilgrims

A Series Thru First Peter

## Divine Institutions

The Bible teaches that there are divinely ordained institutions that include, for example, marriage and the family, the church, and human government. Regarding human government, the Bible teaches: (1) God raises and removes nations and rulers; (2) God ordained human government; (3) believers are called upon to be subordinate (submit) to human government with some exceptions; (4) believers are called upon to honor (respect) those in positions of authority in human government; and (5) believers are called upon to pray for those in human government. The most prominent New Testament passage on human government is Romans 13:1-7. We see many examples of God putting people in power. (e.g., Romans 9:17; John 19:7-11; Daniel 4:28-33; Jeremiah 27:6-8) Jesus also taught submission to human government. (Matthew 22:21) Not only does the Bible teach submission, but also prayer for those in authority. (1 Timothy 2:1-3) These passages raise important questions such as “are there exceptions” and “does this apply to my social media posts?”

**1. Strangers and Pilgrims / Sojourners (2:11-12):** Peter begins a new unit of material on submission by appealing to his readers and “strangers and pilgrims.” Depending on your translation you may read something like “stranger and sojourners” or “foreigners and exiles.” The point is that, as believers, we are temporary residents; we are essentially God’s ambassadors in this world but our citizenship is in the world to come. This idea reflects back on everything Peter wrote to this point: (1) in his prologue (1:1-12) Peter explained the living hope we have rooted in our inheritance reserved in heaven and the salvation to be revealed to us when Jesus returns; (2) Peter urged his readers to have their hope completely on the grace that will be brought to them when Jesus returns (1:13) and as a consequence, to be holy (1:15-16); (3) in recognition that God judges impartially according to our deeds, to live out our time of temporary residence in fear (1:17); (4) to love the brethren (1:22), recognizing that God’s Word (and especially the gospel) is living and enduring, and so also the love that the gospel should naturally produce in our lives is to be living and enduring (1:23-24); and (5) God is building us into a spiritual house with Jesus as the cornerstone, and we are a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation (2:1-10). Peter exhorts his readers, as foreigners / pilgrims / exiles:

— to stay away from fleshly desires that wage war on our “souls”; remember from our study in ch. 1 that “soul” is not spirit but our experience of life (2:11)

— maintain a good testimony before non-believers (2:12)

**2. Subject Ourselves to Human Government (2:13-15):**

In verse 13, Peter began a discourse of submission / subjection that will continue into chapter 3 as he touches upon several aspects of our lives. Peter wrote that we should subject ourselves to human government, adding the critical words “for the Lord’s sake,” in other words, because this pleases God. This subjection applies to emperors and kings as well as their delegates such as governors. Our behavior in subjection to human government will silence our critics (2:15).

**3. Free to Serve (2:16-17):** Peter acknowledges we should live as free people (we are freed from sin) but use our freedom to serve God as his slaves. Peter summarizes how we should live in a memorable creedal statement: “Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the king.” But how does “honor” differ from “submit”? What would it look like to dishonor the king / president? See 1 Samuel 24:1-8 for a good example.