

The Government and Civil Disobedience

📖 Romans 13:2

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Last time we worked with man's relationship to human government as taught by Paul in Romans 13:1-2. In 13:1 Paul is stating a general principle; in general every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. We don't know the exact historical circumstances which prompted Paul to state this principle to the believers at Rome. There are two possibilities I am aware of. First, history reports that many Jews did not like to pay taxes to corrupt Gentile governments. If that is the case then probably Paul is giving an exposition of Jesus' statement, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." Clearly Paul is talking about paying taxes in vv 6 and 7 but that probably does not exhaust the passage because he is not talking about taxes in vv 1-5. Second, another possible historical circumstance is reported by Seutonius who says that during the reign of Emperor Claudius there were so many riots in the Jewish ghetto of Rome that in AD50 he expelled all the Jews from Rome. By the time Paul wrote Romans in AD57 the Jews had been permitted to return. Paul may be writing to teach them to be in submission to the Roman authorities and not be involved in riots. Both possibilities exist and may complement the historical circumstances which prompted Paul. Whatever the historical circumstances, 13:1 is a general principle that is true for all people in all places at all times. In general all people are to willfully subject themselves to those who hold governmental offices. Why? There are two reasons stated in 13:1. First, because there is no authority except from God. This means that there is no human authority except that God has given it. The reason is because God is the one who established human government as a divine institution. Prior to the Flood there was no human government. After the Flood God established the divine institution of human government and gave that authority to Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Basic to that authority is the right to capitally punish men or animals who murder innocent people. The reason is because all people are made in the image of God and so to murder a man is to murder the image of God. It is an attack on God himself. So the first reason every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities is because human government is a divine institution and there would be no human authority apart from Him. The second reason is because the authorities which exist are established by God. This means is that God is sovereign over the arrangement of the circumstances which result in the appointment of people to governmental office. Although there are human means involved Paul bypasses the human means to get to this main point. We looked at several examples. In Dan 2 we observed that God established Nebuchadnezzar as the sovereign king of Babylon and in Dan 4 that God removed sovereignty from

Nebuchadnezzar until he recognized that God was the one who establishes kings and removes kings. In Dan 5 we could have shown that God used the handwriting on the wall to communicate to Belshazzar; that his days had been numbered, he was found wanting and the kingdom was being transferred to the Medes and the Persians. There are numerous examples demonstrating that God is sovereign over the rise and fall of kingdoms and the rise and fall of kings. In Dan 2 we also observed that God appoints men to lesser offices in a kingdom such as Daniel's appointment by Nebuchadnezzar to be second in command over all Babylon and president of the school of astronomy. He did this through circumstances that He Himself arranged in order to bend Nebuchadnezzar's favor toward Daniel for this appointment. The big point is that God is sovereign over the arrangement of circumstances so that they result in the appointment of certain humans to certain governing offices. As for why God arranges for certain individuals to be appointed to a governing office there are many possibilities. Sometimes we can detect these. For example, He arranged for Daniel's rise and appointment in Babylon in order to serve the welfare of His fellow Jews who were later deported to Babylon. From his administrative position he could work for their welfare in a foreign kingdom. Another example is how He arranged for Cyrus the Persian to rise on the world stage in order to send the Jewish people back to their promised land. In another example, He arranged for the rise of Esther into the royal house of Persia as well as her uncle Mordecai in order to protect the Jewish people from certain annihilation by the scheming of Haman. In still another example God arranged for the appointment of the evil Antiochus IV Epiphanes in order to desecrate the Jewish temple as a divine discipline for the Jews accommodating to Greek culture. In the NT He arranged for the appointment of Caesar Augustus who was keenly interested in taxes so that he would issue a decree to take a census of the entire Roman Empire at the proper time just so that Joseph and Mary would travel to Bethlehem and Jesus would be born in that town in fulfillment of prophecy. The point is that God appoints kings and rulers for all kinds of purposes, some of which we can detect and others I'm sure we cannot detect, but all of them have one ultimate goal in mind and that is what we saw in Dan 4:17 with Nebuchadnezzar, "In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes..." So Pauls' argument is that we should willingly submit to these people because He established human government as a divine institution and He arranged all the circumstances which result in the appointment of people to various governmental offices.

In 13:2 that is why Paul says that **whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God**. The word **opposed** means "to take a stand against." What Paul says we have taken a stand against is **the ordinance of God**. It is important to understand this word translated **ordinance** because it is not a very good translation. The word does not really mean a command or institution. The Greek word is *διαταγή* and means "to penetrate into a situation." This sheds a lot of light on why we should submit to governing authorities. It is because the all-seeing God has penetrated the geopolitical situation of the world stage perfectly at any and all times and put the exact rulers He wants on that stage at that time. Therefore to resist that ruler is to say, in effect, that we can penetrate deeper into the geopolitical stage than God and we know better who should be on a throne of rule somewhere.

That is arrogant. It is a loathsome tendency that we forget that God has a plan for history and that right now in His plan He has given sovereignty to Gentile powers. This is the book of Daniel again and particularly chapters 2 and 7 where he laid out the four successive Gentile kingdoms that must rule the world before the kingdom of God comes in righteousness and justice. That plan is right on track and He is arranging circumstances so that certain Gentiles get into office to make certain decisions that drive history in that direction. That reminds us that we are not in control of history, that we are in control of very little. Let's face it, you are a pipsqueak, I am a pipsqueak. We really cannot do much about history, we really cannot see very far or judge properly who should be on what throne of what country for what purpose that furthers His plan for history. It is like Paul said in Romans 11:33-36, God's ways are inscrutable, they are beyond being tracked out. He is doing so much more than we can imagine and yet we have human analyst after human analyst and they make their geopolitical analysis and their predictions based on the analysis and then one thing out of a hundred things they say takes place and they pat themselves on the back and say, "See, I said that was going to happen in 2009." Yeah, yeah, yeah, but the rest of it didn't take place. So you see very little. You can't figure out what exactly is coming next. You can only see the trend as you look at the world stage through the eyes of Daniel, Matthew and Revelation; those are the key books that reveal the big picture of where the world is going. Revelation brings it all together, right? That's the big book that everyone struggles with and doesn't want to deal with and so they just say, it's symbolic and who knows. Well, if we knew all the previous Scripture we would see it more clearly. In Revelation not just four Gentile kingdoms are laid out but seven, the beast has seven heads. The seven begin in the time after the Flood and refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and revived Rome. Those are the seven great successive Gentile kingdoms that rule from the Flood until the Second Coming. When the seventh one, revived Rome, comes into focus it will have ten kings and then an eleventh king will arise who is very wicked and brilliant, he will dispose of three kings and try to destroy Israel and take over the whole world but he will fail because Israel will call on Jesus to be rescue them and He will return and crush all Gentile kingdoms and establish the kingdom of God in its place, a kingdom which will endure forever. We can see that through the lens of Scripture. That's not a problem and there are some more details added to the picture so we see some details. But most of the details we don't see. For example, we aren't told in the Bible who the next president of the United States of America is going to be. But God has already decided and He is arranging circumstances so that that man, or woman, is appointed, and He has a purpose for that. When I say that am I saying that it doesn't matter then if I vote or not? No, that is fatalism and that is not what I am teaching. That is a distortion of what I am teaching. There is always human responsibility. How we vote is significant. It may not be significant to other people but it is significant to God for two reasons. First, because they are part of the means involved in getting a person into office. We have the right to vote in this country and that is a right that we have a duty to fulfill. God creates nations and we are in this nation, therefore we ought to vote. But you say, well, it doesn't really matter because the elections can be manipulated. That's true but that fact alone falls short of downplaying the importance of voting. That's why we have a second reason our votes are significant. They are significant to God. He is interested in how we vote. He wants us to develop a biblical worldview, think through the issues from a

biblical perspective and vote accordingly. Even if the vote is manipulated by some group or the person with the most biblical policies doesn't get into the oval office our vote still matters to the One who really matters; God. So what men do with our vote is what men do with it and they may spit on it, but if God values it and He is pleased with it then it has eternal value because it will be rewardable. That is why you must study all the issues in order to show yourself approved unto God. But whoever gets in that office we have to willfully submit to because God gave that person authority and to resist that person is to resist God who has penetrated the geopolitical situation perfectly and has them there for a purpose, the ultimate purpose of which is Dan 4, "that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes..."

Now in 13:2 the end of the verse tells us that not only are we opposing the penetrating decision of God but **those who have opposed** these authorities **will receive condemnation upon themselves**. Before we get too far into this what is it we are **condemned** too? The KJV implies that we are condemned to hell. It says "they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Will you go to hell if you oppose governing authorities? No, you will not go to hell for opposing governing authorities; you will go to hell for not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. All that is being said here is that if you oppose the governing authorities then they're going to find you guilty in a court of law.

Now this is the best place to deal with civil disobedience because it's talking about resisting governing authorities and receiving condemnation. So this will be a little diversion from this text but we are doing it because verse 2 opens the door for the possibility that we may oppose governing authorities. Now the most fundamental thing to understand is that if you do commit civil disobedience Paul is saying you will have to accept the consequences. You can't fight back when you have broken the law, you just have to accept it. There are some different situations I'll show you in a minute but let's look at some examples of accepting the consequences of civil disobedience. Turn to Dan 1. This case shows that you don't always have to commit civil disobedience, that there are alternative actions you can take that might be successful. This one we might call requesting permission to opt out. In Dan 1 he and several other nobles of Israel had been taken captive by the Babylonians. This was the first deportation in 606-5BC. Nebuchadnezzar's purpose in taking the nobles was to train them in Babylonian learning and culture so that they could help him administer rule over the Jews in his kingdom. The best, most capable students were to serve in his court. Now if you notice verse 5, "The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service." Food and wine. The best food and wine. No problem right? Government perk. Well, in verse 8 it was a problem for Daniel. Note, "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself." Why was it a problem for Daniel? Because the food and drink would defile him. Why would it defile him? Because the Jews had dietary laws in the Torah and this food and drink was either unclean or had been sacrificed to Babylonian gods and so observe that "Daniel made up his mind." This means he could not eat

and drink this stuff in good conscience. But observe that he did not just commit civil disobedience. Instead what did he do? He sought permission to opt out. He was very shrewd in this and by the end of it all you see that God showed favor to Daniel because Daniel followed God's law and as a result Daniel didn't have to eat the food and drink the wine. So here's an example of how it worked out. It's an approach you can use, if your conscience is bothering you, ask the government permission to opt out. You can be shrewd in doing it. People have done this and been successful.

Now turn to Dan 3. This case shows that sometimes you do have to commit civil disobedience. In Dan 3 we have Nebuchadnezzar again and this time he builds this massive statue of himself made of gold, 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide, so it was very tall and slender. And the whole issue here in verses 2-3 is Nebuchadnezzar is gathering everyone in his administration, everyone from the entire kingdom in any office, out to this plain where this statue is set up and they're all going to bow down to it and worship. Why is he doing this? Because he wants to ensure that everyone in his administration from the highest to the lowest levels are loyal to him. He doesn't want any moles in his administration. Why is he so intent on spying out any moles? Because he wants to secure his kingdom. The man was extremely smart and also extremely obsessive compulsive. Anyway, they're all supposed to bow down and worship at the signal. And what is the penalty for refusing in verse 6? Immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. So, there's a little bit of motivation there. He gets a pretty good response in verse 7. In verse 12 though, there were a few Jews there; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and they got caught not bowing down. Why didn't they bow down? Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not worship any graven image." They just couldn't do it. So they commit civil disobedience. In verse 13 Nebuchadnezzar was enraged and they brought them before the king. He gives them another chance. This time they're on display in front of everybody. Are they going to bow down? Verse 16, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸"But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Classic case of civil disobedience. You have to love these guys. They are staring the most powerful man in the world in the face and saying, "Sorry buddy. You can do whatever you want to us and our God can save us if He wants too, but even if He doesn't, no can do, we're not going to bow down to your phony gods." And you know the rest of the story. They heated up the furnace seven times hotter, threw them in and God showed favor to them and rescued them. That's teaching that Jews who followed God's law in foreign kingdoms could be blessed. We cite it as an example of the principle of civil disobedience when God's word comes into conflict with man's word. There are some things we just can't do and we have to respectfully tell the governing authorities, sorry buddy, and be willing to accept the consequences. So there are two cases, one is to request to opt out, the other is to commit civil disobedience.

Let's look at one from the NT, lest you think this is just for OT Israel. This is Acts 4. Peter and John had been in the Temple and they had healed a man. This was a bona fide miracle as everyone in the chapter agrees. The problem was in verse 1 certain priests and the captive of the temple and the Sadducees, these are all rulers, we'd say governing authorities. And they didn't like what Peter and John were teaching which is verse 2, that Jesus had risen from the dead. So what did they do? Threw them in jail. Alright, so now in verse 5 we've got to have court. The rulers, the scribes, the high priest, Caiaphas, every one of any rank was there, these were all the big wigs. And they put Peter and John out on center stage and start interrogating. What power did you use to do this? I'm sure they wanted to charge them with doing it by Satan. That's what they did with Jesus. That was the explanation. But the problem was that argument didn't fly because He was doing good. Satan doesn't do good. So they say Jesus' name and they give the testimony that salvation is only in His name. The authorities didn't like that too much because basically thousands of people were following after Jesus and this was putting a big dent in their pocket books. So they get together in one of their smoky back rooms. This is what is always going on. It's always a plan to get rid of the good people because we can't have them exposing our shame. Their problem was they couldn't really charge them with anything so in verse 17 here's the plan. "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." You see they were concerned about losing the support of the people. It's always the money. Follow the money. So they tell them, you can't speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Verse 19 is the civil disobedience. "But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;²⁰for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." So they said, sorry, no can do buddy. How do the Jewish authorities do? Verse 21, "When they had threatened them further," threats, "Well, you better do what we say..." but "they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened." The bottom line is they let them go because it was not good for their little political careers to beat them. Political reputation mattered then and it should matter now but the government is so big and powerful today that any amount of money and a few slick words can buy you a free pass, even if you murder. We are in a heap of trouble and you know that and if you don't know that you better wake up.

Now we've developed that out of Rom 13:2 because Paul said if you oppose the governing authorities you're going to receive condemnation. And generally you don't oppose them but if you do oppose them because it's a violation of conscience like Daniel or a violation of worshipping God like Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego or a violation of preaching the name of Jesus like Peter and John then you have to say, sorry buddy, no can do. But when you say that expect that you will be condemned for doing so. You may be fined, you may be thrown in the slammer, you may have to suffer through all that goes on in the slammer, but you can be shrewd in all the courts, you can fight legally, just be forewarned that if you do this you will probably have to face the consequences.

Now let's not leave this now, let's think about what's happening in the United States of America and when it is that we will have to commit civil disobedience and accept the judgment of the law against us. Right now we have this thing called The Constitution. This is a powerful document. Not many people in our country know what it says. They need to get educated. There are good groups trying to educate Americans and I'm sorry to say it's not the public educational system. They are educating people against the Constitution, in socialism, that system ought to be entirely shut down but we know what's really going on, that system is training the next generation to be against the Constitution. But right now it's the Constitution that is the document that is getting in the way of our government doing whatever they want to do. So through executive orders and legislating from the bench they are eroding it. It won't be long before it's gone. Right now we still have this one amendment called the 2nd Amendment. If you don't know what that is you should read it and get a gun and learn to use it. It is very unique among nations in the world that the people would have a 2nd amendment, it says "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." That's kind of important. I would say that as long as we have the 2nd amendment we will have a 1st amendment. What's the 1st amendment? Freedom of speech and religious liberty. But if the 2nd amendment goes away and our Arms are taken away then just as surely as night follows day the 1st amendment will go away. And if that happens then I will tell you that you are no longer living in the United States of America because the Constitution will have been done away with and a new one will have come into its place. You will have two options at that point. You can leave and go to some other nation where you won't be able to bear arms either and are at the whims of that human government, or you will have to stay and stand up for the word of God and accept the consequences. The latter is what happened to the believers in the early church like Paul and Peter.

Now what are we supposed to do as our Constitution is getting destroyed. I'd do what Paul did. Turn to Acts 16. Acts 16 is the passage that says that when a government breaks its own laws you have to call them on the carpet. You cannot and should not let them get away with it. Most people in our country don't care. If it's not affecting them immediately they don't care. And it's also true that the government has gotten so big and they have so much money that it's difficult to beat them in the courts. But you have to call them on it. You can't just stand there and let them be lawless. What happened in Acts 16? In Acts 16:12 you see Paul and Silas arrive in Philippi, this was a top city in Macedonia named after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great! It was now a Roman colony. That's very important to know. Because in a Roman colony what has to be followed? Roman law. Now they're ministering there and notice in verse 16 that they were going to the place of prayer and along the way there was a "slave-girl" who had a spirit of divination, it was a spirit of python in the original and this was the god Asclepius and what she had was probably a ventriloquist demon and she could speak to the ground and call up the dead or so people thought. What was happening was a demon was mimicking the voices of the lost dead and people thought, hey, that's grandma. Anyway this was making her masters a great fortune. In verse 17-18 she followed Paul around for a few days and it became a great annoyance and so Paul turned around and cast that demon out. Now the woman was made well but her masters were all bent out of shape

because that put a dent in their pocket books. Again, it's always the money. Follow the money. So in verse 19 they drag them before the governing authorities, Roman authorities. And in verse 20 they take them before the chief magistrates. There were two of them and they were the top authorities in the district. The masters make some false accusations against Paul and Silas, the gist of which is these men are proclaiming things that are contrary to Roman law. And in verse 22 the crowds make a big to do and so the chief magistrates are swayed by the crowds and end up making a big mistake. They didn't investigate, they just made a rash decision to pacify the people. So verse 23, "When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;²⁴and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." Now they've just acted lawlessly whether they knew it or not. What had they done? They had beaten two Roman citizens. Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and under Roman law no Roman citizen could be beaten without a trial. But here they've just done it. That is the situation and we want to see how Paul handled it. Not the singing and all of that. That is a great story and shows how the situations we find ourselves, even unjustly, can be used to bring people to Christ. But come down to verse 35. "Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." So, do you see what they're doing? The chief magistrates didn't come, they sent their go to boys to do their dirty work. Verse 36, "And the jailer reported these words to Paul, *saying*, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."³⁷But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." So did Paul let the governing authorities break the law and get away with it? No indeed. That means no way in hell. Well, what happened in verse 38? "The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans," and they should have been, they broke Roman law, beating Roman citizens without a trial, that was a serious offense, they could be disciplined by their superiors. So verse 39, "they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city." Paul and Silas suffered under a misappropriation of justice and lawless of governing officials. Our point is that they didn't just let them get away with it. They called them on the carpet. And I think that is a good example of what we should do as long as we have The Constitution. We have to appeal to law. The Constitution is the Law of the land, not the president, not the Supreme Court, the Constitution. All governing authorities in the United States of America are under the Constitution but obviously they are trying to do away with that document.

Now if they are successful then we will be a different nation and there will be a different constitution. This happened in Rome. The Law changed relative to Christianity and I want to show you that and how Paul acted. If you turn to Acts 18 you see the decision of Gallio at Corinth. This was a significant court decision because it was made by the regional governor and so it had to be followed by all other regions in the Roman Empire, at least for the time. This is the situation where Paul was dragged before the judgment seat at Corinth. You see in 18:11 that Paul settled at Corinth for a year and six months and he was teaching the word of God among these people.

Then in verse 12, "While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;¹⁵but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."¹⁶And he drove them away from the judgment seat." What just happened? Gallio said I'm not dealing with this dispute, it's an interreligious dispute. Rome had an official list of approved religions that could be practiced in the Roman Empire; Judaism was on that list. What Gallio is saying is that from his vantage point Christianity is a sect within Judaism. And since Judaism is a legal religion then you guys deal with it. It's an interreligious dispute. Rome had nothing to say about interreligious disputes. So what happened here was significant because it made it official that Christianity was a sect within Judaism and so it was a legal religion to practice. The problem that comes about a few years after this is Nero comes to be Caesar. Nero married a woman named Poppea and she was either a Jewish woman or a proselyte to Judaism. And she requested that he show favor to the Jews.¹ She was the one we think made clear to Nero that Christianity was not a part of Judaism. What did that mean? That meant that Christianity was no longer a legal religion to practice. Do you see where this is going? This is going to why Paul was ultimately executed by Rome. Paul was propagating an illegal religion. That is how he became a martyr. The law changed. That is why, if you turn to Rev 2:8-11 you see other Christians martyred in Rome. This is the Church of Smyrna, in Asia Minor. In verse 9, "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."¹⁰"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Why could they be persecuted unto death? Because Christianity was an illegal religion now. And so it switched in Rome, Christianity was legal and then it became illegal. And that could happen here in America. Right now it is legal but it could become illegal. And what will we have to do then? We will have to do as Paul did, maintain our testimony, we will have to do as the Smyrnans did, be faithful and willing to accept the consequences of death. That is where martyrdom comes into the equation.

But as long as we have the Constitution we can ask permission to opt out, will can hold the feet of governing authorities to the fire when they break the law, but once we no longer have a 2nd amendment we will no longer have a 1st amendment and then it will be open season on Christianity in America and we will have to be like all the great saints of history; Daniel, Paul, Silas, the Christians of Smyrna and so forth and so on through all of church history and we will have to say something like Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, "Oh ruler, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...But even if He doesn't, we are not going to bow down and worship your phony idols. That is the power of Christianity because even if they kill the body they cannot kill the soul. That is the power of the doctrine of resurrection. And don't worry God says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."

¹ The particular incident recorded in Josephus is as follows: "About the same time king Agrippa built himself a very large dining room in the royal place at Jerusalem, near to the portico. (190) Now this palace had been erected of old by the children of Asamoneus, and was situated upon an elevation, and afforded a most delightful prospect to those that had a mind to take a view of the city, which prospect was desired by the king; and there he could lie down, and eat, and thence observe what was done in the temple; (191) which thing, when the chief men of Jerusalem saw, they were very much displeased at it; for it was not agreeable to the institutions of our country or law that what was done in the temple should be viewed by others, especially what belonged to the sacrifices. They therefore erected a wall upon the uppermost building which belonged to the inner court of the temple towards the west; (192) which wall, when it was built, did not only intercept the prospect of the dining room in the palace, but also of the western cloisters that belonged to the outer court of the temple also, where it was that the Romans kept guards for the temple at the festivals. (193) At these doings both king Agrippa, and principally Festus the procurator, were much displeased; and Festus ordered them to pull the wall down again; but the Jews petitioned him to give them leave to send an embassy about this matter to Nero; for they said they could not endure to live if any part of the temple should be demolished; (194) and when Festus had given them leave so to do, they sent ten of their principal men to Nero, as also Ismael, the high priest, and Helcias, the keeper of the sacred treasure. (195) And when Nero had heard what they had to say, he not only forgave^h them what they had already done, but also gave them leave to let the wall they had built stand. This was granted them in order to gratify Poppea, Nero's wife, who was a religious woman, and had requested these favors of Nero, and who gave order to the ten ambassadors to go their way home; but retained Helcias and Ismael as hostages with herself. (196) As soon as the king heard this news, he gave the high priesthood to Joseph, who was called Cabi, the son of Simon, formerly high priest." Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).