



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 19, 2024

Mike Johnson, Joe Biden, and Romans 13

House Speaker Mike Johnson, confronted with a “gotcha” question, [remained calm, cool, and collected](#). A reporter asked him on Thursday if he believed that “Joe Biden’s presidency is God’s will?”

The reporter was referring to Johnson’s forthright claim to be a believer in the Holy Scriptures during his inaugural address in November:

I believe that Scripture and the Bible is very clear that God is the One [Who] raises up those in authority. He raised up each of you, all of us.

And I believe God has ordained and allowed each one of us to be brought here for this specific moment and this time.



AP Images
Mike Johnson

He answered the reporter’s question:

I said in my speech before I took the gavel that, look, I’m a Bible-believing Christian, right? Bible-believing Christians believe what the Bible says. The Bible says that God is the one who raises up people in authority. I believe God is sovereign.

By the way, so did the Founders. I quoted the Declaration of Independence. They acknowledged that our rights don’t come from government, they will come from God, and we’re made in His image — everybody’s made the same. We all are given equal rights and value, and that’s something that we defend. So if you believe all those things, then you believe that God is the one that allows people to be raised in authority.

[Biden’s presidency] must have been God’s will, then. That’s my belief.

But what if Biden is, as Steven Bannon says, an “illegitimate president?” How does that square with Romans 13 where the Apostle Paul appears to declare that whoever is in charge deserves our allegiance, devotion, and submission?

Here is what the Apostle Paul wrote, from the King James Version:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.



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What about those who “resisted” the authorities in history? Didn’t Moses violate God’s principle of submission to authority when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster in defense of his fellow Hebrew? Didn’t Elijah violate it when he openly challenged Ahab and Jezebel? Did Daniel violate God’s principle when he disobeyed the king’s law not to pray openly to God?

And what about Peter and the other apostles? They were ordered not to preach Jesus and disobeyed and wound up in prison. They were miraculously released and when the Jewish leaders found them preaching again:

They brought them [and] set them before the council; and the high priest asked them: “Did not we command you that you should not teach in His [Jesus’] name? You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:27-29)

How does the common understanding of Romans 13 square with the statement (attributed to Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin) that “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God”? Or that of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, which issued this in 1774:

Resistance to tyranny becomes the Christian and social duty of each individual.

Continue steadfast, and with a proper sense of your dependence on God, nobly defend those rights which Heaven gave, and no man ought to take from us.

The “common understanding” of Romans 13 was expressed by libertarian Paul Green, calling it his “totalitarian version”:

Totally submit to the government and all its officials, for there is no official that is not preordained by God to rule you.

Therefore, any sign of resistance to any official is defying God and you will be destroyed.

But do whatever they decide — that is being good, and God through His officials will reward you.

But disobeying anything they say or decide, any rule they make, is bad and you should be afraid because the government’s agents have swords and guns with good reason — and they are specially ordained by God to violently punish those who disobey them in any way, because to do so is evil.

Chuck Baldwin, pastor of Liberty Fellowship in Kalispell, Montana, and the Constitution Party’s nominee for president in 2008, has a different view. It’s based on the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution (Article VI, Clause 2):

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof ... shall be the supreme Law of the Land.

Writes Baldwin:



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This means that in America the “higher powers” are not the men who occupy elected office; they are the tenets and principles set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Under our laws and form of government, it is the duty of every citizen, including our elected officials, to obey the U.S. Constitution.

Therefore, this is how Romans Chapter 13 reads to Americans:

“Let every soul be subject unto the [U.S. Constitution.] For there is no [Constitution] but of God: the [Constitution] that be [is] ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the [Constitution], resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

According to Baldwin, therefore, it’s not the citizens who resist tyranny who violate Romans 13, but politicians such as Biden who repeatedly ignore the limits and chains of the Constitution in their efforts to install tyranny in America.

It’s unfortunate that Mike Johnson failed to make that distinction clear in his response to that “gotcha” question on Thursday.



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