

# PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)*

Volume 9, Issue 9

September 2011

## Not My Government

Art Nelson

### Introduction

We seem to be living in a time of political turmoil. Not just here in America but in various places around the world. As followers of Christ, what should be our outlook on this? Many believe that it is the duty of Christians to be political activists. Others believe that Christians should avoid all involvement in political agendas. Some believe that Christians need to take over the government in order to usher in the return of Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

As the old saying goes, to get along “don't talk about politics or religion”. Well, this time we are going to take on both subjects and it will be an important task.

### Patriotism

Patriotism is defined as “love or devotion to one's country”. Its primary synonym is “nationalism” according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. At what point does following Christ come into conflict with patriotism?

When the lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment, He answered with this:

And He said to him, "**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.**"  
(Matthew 22:37 NASB)

If you follow this commandment it doesn't leave much room for “love of country”, does it? Why do you think that is? What is wrong with loving our country? Nothing, as long as it is secondary to our love of the Lord. The Lord our God is a jealous God and will have no other God before Him, including our nation, our country. We can have no idols in our heart.

The Disciples loved their country. They repeatedly asked Jesus if He would now restore the kingdom of Israel. However, only Judas put patriotism ahead of the Lord. Evidence indicates that he was a Zealot, a political activist dedicated to overthrowing the rule of Rome. Judas saw in

Jesus the solution to the political problem. After all, was not Messiah going to overthrow Rome and restore glory to Israel? However, as time went by and it wasn't happening, Judas thought he would force the issue by betraying Jesus. This would force Jesus to reveal His Kingship and instigate the removal of Roman rule from Israel. Judas had seen Jesus move through crowds and escape the Pharisees on several occasions. He did not believe that Jesus would allow Himself to be taken. But, it didn't work that way because Judas didn't understand the nature of the King nor of His Kingdom. [*For more about Judas see [The Judas Factor](#) on the website*] Judas attempted to use Jesus to achieve political goals and the desires of his patriotic brothers. He utterly failed because you can't use God for your own purposes, even good political ones.

## Nation of God

While the Jews expected the kingdom of Israel to be restored in its glory when Messiah came, Jesus made it clear to them that it was not going to happen.

**"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. (Matthew 21:43 NKJV)**

The kingdom of God was taken away from Israel and given to those who were of the faith of Abraham, those who received the inheritance of the Spirit. In Hebrews when the writer speaks of the heroes of the faith, he says they “desire a better country” (Heb. 11:16). In answer to Pilot's question about what he had done, Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world (*kosmos*, world system). If it were, His servants would be fighting to prevent what was happening. We are citizens of a better country than any country that is on earth.

The Kingdom of God is our nation. We are fellow citizens with the saints (Eph. 2:19). This nation finds full expression in this realm when Jesus returns establishing His 1000 year earthly reign as King. In the meantime, we are His ambassadors (2Cor. 5:20) representing the King and His Kingdom. This is where our loyalties should be placed.

## Our Responsibility

In America there is a fervor for democracy—a government “of the people, by the people, for the people”. However, the Kingdom of God is not a democracy. It is a theocracy—government of God, by God, for the purposes of God. Had the government of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel under Moses been a democracy, they would have voted overwhelmingly several times to return to Egypt.

We must remember that we are under the government of God; not the government of any nation on earth even though we might live in any country. When Jesus prayed His priestly prayer to the Father, He asked this of Him:

**I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (John 17:15-16 NKJV)**

We are not being taken out of the world and neither are we being relieved of our obligation to live under our national governments. We submit to our country's government “for the Lord's sake”. Peter made this very clear in his epistle.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13-14 NASB)

However, Peter also made it clear that a government that commanded obedience that contradicted the instructions of the Lord was not to be obeyed.

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29 NASB)

Peter and the other apostles suffered the consequences of their words. They were flogged for their statement. When we obey God rather than men, we have to be ready to take the backlash from men, even those in governmental authority. We depend solely upon God to keep us.

The early church was persecuted because they proclaimed a King other than Caesar and a government other than that of Rome. Persecution didn't end until the church became a part of government under Constantine. We still suffer from this because national government is mixed with church—patriotism is considered christian even when it requires compromise with the Word of God.

Why does it seem from the Scriptures that the lawless one, the person we call the Antichrist, can so easily deceive even those who profess Christ? One of the reasons is that he is offering a political solution to the world's problems and patriotism requires that he be followed.

There is no nation in the world that is not a part of the world system. The world system is opposed to all that is of God.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17 NASB)

Our allegiance is to the Lord and to His Kingdom not to our country. We must understand that there will come a time when our allegiance will be tested because the commands of the Lord will be in conflict with the demands of our country's laws.

All I can say is I look “for a better country” than the one in which I live in the natural and I hope you do too. The Lord told us to seek it (Matt. 6:33).

© 2003-2011 by Art Nelson and [Lifestream Teaching Ministries](http://www.LifestreamTeaching.com)

Previous issues of Present Truth are on the website: [www.Lifestreamteaching.com](http://www.Lifestreamteaching.com)

For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

[artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com](mailto:artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com)

You have permission to copy and distribute these materials provided:

1) no changes are made to the content, and, 2) they are not sold.

**Removal instructions:**

This is a free teaching letter, without cost or obligation.

If you have received this teaching letter in error or if you desire not to receive "Present Truth" teaching letter please reply with "remove" in the subject area.