

How To Live Under An Evil Government

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Introduction: God's Word established two very important facts concerning human governments:

1. All government leaders are controlled by God and will accomplish God's plan, (Romans 13:1,2,4; Daniel 2:21).
2. All governments may be judged by God's standard: judged as good, if they punish evil and reward good; or judged as evil, if they punish good and reward evil, (Romans 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14).

Since unregenerate government leaders will naturally follow their own sinful hearts and since Satan has a plan to oppose God which incorporates these leaders, there will be ungodly governments. How should Christians live under an evil government?

1. MARKS OF AN EVIL GOVERNMENT

Daniel, one of the Old Testament prophets, lived under a mixture of evil governments (the Babylonian, Daniel 1:1; the Chaldean, Daniel 5:30; and the Mede, Daniel 5:31; 9:1). The Babylonian government of Daniel's day could serve as an example of an evil government since it is referred to so often in God's Word. Though the Babylonian government of Daniel's day has died out, the Babylonian government will rise up again in the end times and be the most evil government of all history (Revelation 17 and 18). In order for us to appreciate how God's servant Daniel lived, we must understand the evil government under which he served God. How evil was the Babylonian government of Daniel's day?

A. It dominated life.

Evil governments practice expansion, absorption, and control of others. An evil government will use its power and strength to accomplish these goals. Daniel testified that Babylon "besieged" the people of Jerusalem, (Daniel 1:1). The word "besieged" (Hebrew "masor") comes from a root word which means "to siege, to show hostility, to be an adversary." "Applied to military action it means to relentlessly attack an opponent's stronghold." (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke, Moody, 1980, Vol. 2, page 761).

B. It dismantled true religion.

Evil governments do not allow the freedom to practice the worship of the true and living God. Evil governments confiscate and suppress the things of God. Daniel wrote that Babylon "carried" some of the articles of the house of God from Jerusalem back to the land of Shinar and locked them up in the treasure house of their false god, (Daniel 1:2). This meant that Jerusalem no longer possessed these religious articles, thus access to them was suppressed. The things of God became "trophies" of victory for an evil government.

C. It dehumanized people.

Evil governments exploit people for their own purposes and goals. Evil governments force people to become slaves of the state. Under an evil government people are not free and do not have a will of their own. Daniel recorded that Babylon displaced the best people of Jerusalem and brought them back to Babylon to "serve" the king, (Daniel 1:3-5, KJV states "stand" the NKJV states "serve"). The word "serve" (Hebrew "hamad") has the idea of "remaining or enduring" and carries with it the concept of "standing before someone in a position of obedience, respect, and readiness to serve." (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke, Moody, 1980, Vol. 2, pages 673-674).

D. It deceived people with the occult.

Evil governments deviate from following God's instructions or goals, to relying upon the realm of the occult to accomplish their own goals. Daniel reveals that Babylon consulted the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans, for direction in life, (Daniel 1:20; 2:2). However, the king of Babylon knew that the occult was merely a tool of deception, (Daniel 2:2-13; 4:6-7).

E. It deified the leader.

Evil governments deviate from God's authority over mankind and elevate the leader to a position that is worshipped. Evil governments create a worship system opposite of what God wants which takes God's glory away from Him and gives it to human leaders. Daniel reported that Babylon tried to unify the religion of the land into one pagan religion through the deification of the king, (Daniel 3:1-7).

F. It disregarded life.

Evil governments do not value life and believe people are expendable. Babylon treated people with cruelty when they did not do what the government wanted. Daniel recorded that people could be in danger of losing their head, (Daniel 1:10). He also stated that if the king didn't get what he wanted that "he would cut the people into pieces and have their houses made into a dunghill, " (Daniel 2:5).

Note: This is just a sampling of what an evil government looks like. This example gives us an idea of what God's servant Daniel faced living under the evil government of Babylon.

2. METHODS OF LIVING UNDER AN EVIL GOVERNMENT

Daniel modeled how to live under an evil government. By examining Daniel's life under an evil government, we find five character traits that allowed Daniel to survive and receive God's blessing.

A. Daniel practiced commitment

One way to prepare for life under an evil government is to live your life with commitment to the Lord right now. Daniel lived under a government that was corruption, however, it was not as evil as Babylon. Prior to becoming a captive and being forced to live under an evil government, Daniel built into his life the disciplines of godliness and profitability for the Lord's use, (Daniel 1:3-6).

B. Daniel practiced conviction

Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself, (Daniel 1:8). As a Jew, Daniel was not to eat certain foods. Living in the king of Babylon's domain subjected Daniel to foods that he was not to eat. The king wanted Daniel to eat certain foods and drink liquids. Daniel knew he was not allowed to indulge himself in this way. Two things are important to realize: first, no one would know back in his homeland if he partook of the king's table; and second, not many of those taken with him in captivity would probably blame Daniel if he partook of the king's table in order to save his own life. However, Daniel determined ahead of time he would not compromise his standards.

C. Daniel practiced courage

Daniel had great courage. He deviated from the king's rules because the king's rules forced him to compromise his standards. Daniel trusted in God and believed that no matter what the outcome, God would bless him, (Daniel 1:11-17).

D. Daniel practiced constraint

For many living under an evil government, when the opportunity to strike out physically against the evil government would avail itself, they would do it. Daniel could have attacked the king when he had opportunities. However, Daniel sought ways of survival without placing himself and others in severe danger, (Daniel 1:18-20).

E. Daniel practiced consistency

Daniel was being protected by God. He was greatly blessed by God because of the godly way he lived his life. Some evil men within the evil government were jealous of Daniel. These men tried to set Daniel up because they knew how Daniel practiced his religious life before God. These evil men had the king pass a law that would put Daniel in danger. Even though Daniel knew about this set up, he still followed his daily spiritual routine, (Daniel 6:1-10).

Note: One thing we know about these five character traits is that for Daniel there were no guarantees that he would live or that he would die under an evil government. But Daniel practiced what God wanted regardless of the outcome.

Conclusion: Daniel's government was overtaken by an evil government because it had deviated from God, (Daniel 1:2, "The Lord gave Jehoiachkim king of Judah into his [Babylon's] hand"). One fact is clear, our own government has deviated from its Christian heritage. Our government's foundation was established in God's Word. The fact that our country has allowed abortion, homosexual marriages, military actions for the personal goals of one government leader, the corruption of the highest office of the country, the undermining of the constitution of our country, the suppression of Christian churches, and public education incorporating curriculum that is anti-god, is setting our country up for judgment. Are we as Christians ready for persecution if we are judged by an evil government?