**All that those, who are exhorting Christians to become involved in the political structure of this present world system, are doing is encouraging Christians to *forsake their high calling and become involved in matters totally unrelated to their calling*. Such is, in reality, an encouragement for Christians to involve themselves in affairs related to *the wrong kingdom* — the present kingdom of Satan rather than the coming kingdom of Christ.**

**Anti-Christian**

**By Arlen L. Chitwood of** [**Lamp Broadcast**](http://lampbroadcast.org/)

*Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,*

*which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”* ([Matthew 13:31-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31-32&t=NKJV))

Satan is presently directing his activities against two groups of people in the world. On the one hand he is moving against *Israel,* and on the other hand he is moving *against the Church.* He has been at war for centuries, extending into millennia, against both *the old creation in Jacob and the new creation in Christ.*

The reason is very simple and obvious: Both of these creations occupy their place in time at the center of God’s preordained activity surrounding His Son throughout the ages (*cf.* [Hebrews 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.2&t=NKJV)); and the purpose for the very existence of both, when realized, will result in the end of Satan’s present rule over the earth.

Satan has sought for millennia to use the Gentile nations to do away with Israel, and he has been following a somewhat similar pattern during the past two thousand years in his efforts to do away with Christianity. Aside from an early persecution of Christians at the hands of the leaders in Israel, Satan has used the Gentile nations down through the years as his main instrument to destroy Christianity. Satan and his angels hold the scepter in the heavenly sphere of the present kingdom, and the Gentile nations hold the scepter under Satan and his angels in the earthly sphere. Within this framework, power from the heavenlies is exhibited through an earthly rule among the nations in Satan’s ever-continuing anti-Semitic and anti-Christian endeavors. The Gentile nations are being used by Satan *on both fronts*, though in different ways; and this is a fact that must be recognized.

(For additional information on Satan and his angel’s present rule from the heavens through the Gentile nations here on earth, refer to [THOSE ON HIS LEFT HAND](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-six.php#THOSE%20ON%20HIS%20LEFT%20HAND) in this site.)

THROUGH ISRAEL FIRST

Though Satan’s warfare against Christians down through the years has been channeled through the Gentile nations, there was a short period, comparatively speaking, of persecution by Israel that preceded the Gentile nations becoming involved after this fashion. Rulers in the nation of Israel, already opposed to the message of Christ and His disciples in the pre-Christian era, became the immediate persecutors of Christians following the inception of Christianity in 33 A.D.

The Church at this time, and for the first few years of its existence (possibly as many as ten years), was comprised only of converts from the nation of Israel; and the rulers of the Jews looked upon Christianity in several different ways — mainly as a perversion of true Judaism, though also as a rapidly spreading movement that was decimating their constituency.

Thus, in their efforts to stop the spread of Christianity, one finds the early persecution of the Church beginning in Jerusalem under Jewry, subsequently resulting in the Christians being “*all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria*.” And this is the point in the book of Acts where Saul, later to become the Apostle Paul, appears on the scene ([Acts 8:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1ff&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts. 7:58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts.+7.58&t=NKJV)).

Saul was a strict Pharisee who thought he was performing a service for God by striving to eliminate this “*new sect*.” Saul “*made havoc of the Church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison*” ([Acts 8:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.3&t=NKJV)); and he is seen consenting to the death of numerous Christians during this period ([Acts 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV); [26:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.10-11&t=NKJV)).

Saul was on such a mission, headed for Damascus, when the Lord stopped him in route and revealed the true nature of his persecutions ([Acts 9:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-4&t=NKJV)). Saul was, at that moment, converted; and after his experiences in “*the house of Ananias*” and subsequently spending “*certain days*” with the disciples at Damascus, “*Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God*” ([Acts 9:8-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.8-20&t=NKJV)).

Beginning at this point, Saul found himself numbered among the persecuted ([Acts 9:21-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.21-24&t=NKJV)); and he then began doing that which he previously thought he had been doing — performing a service for God.

The Jewish persecution can be traced in the book of Acts through about the first thirty years of Christianity’s existence (*cf.* [Acts 4:1-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.1-22&t=NKJV); [21:27-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+21.27-31&t=NKJV)). Jewish persecution beyond this point though could only have lasted a few more years, for Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews dispersed in 70 A.D.

However, before this occurred, the period of Roman persecution commenced; and this is the point in history where Satan began his efforts to destroy Christianity through the Gentile nations. Although Satan used the nation of Israel in this respect during the opening years of the Christian movement, Israel did not constitute one of the nations through which Satan ruled ([Daniel 10:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.21&t=NKJV)); nor does Israel constitute such a nation today.

Thus, in this respect, the early Jewish persecution of Christians was not exactly the same as that which later transpired under the Gentiles. When the persecution of Christians began under Rome, Satan, for the *first* time, had the entire matter within the scope of *his kingdom and control*; and this is where one really finds the master plan of Satan, as it relates to the Church, beginning to unfold.

THEN THROUGH ROME

So long as Christianity was thought of as associated with Judaism, the Romans had *little* problem with Christians in the Empire, for Judaism was recognized as “a legal sect.” But once the Romans began to view Christianity as separate and distinct from Judaism, problems arose — major problems.

Christianity, separate from Judaism, came under the banner of the Roman state; and because of the non-allegiance of Christians to the state, it was seen as “an illegal religion.” “Religion” and “State” were *one in the Roman Empire.* The people were polytheistic in their worship, and this extended over into the realm of emperor-worship (they deified the emperor); they worshipped many gods, but only one king: *Caesar.*

On the other hand, “Christianity” and “State” were *separate in the Roman Empire*. Christians were monotheistic in their worship; they worshipped the one true and living God, and their only King was *Christ.*

Christian practices were looked upon as *treasonable* in some quarters, not only because they spoke of a King other than Caesar, but also because they refused to join in emperor-worship. Thus, Christians gradually became quite unpopular among the Romans; and by the time of Nero (54-68 A.D.), they were ready-objects for that which was about to occur — *a long-lasting persecution at the hands of Rome*.

The event that sparked the beginning of the official persecution of Christians by rulers in the Roman Empire was their being accused of arson when Rome burned in 64 A.D.

Although this persecution was limited to Christians in Rome itself, *the precedent for* and *manner* of persecuting Christians in the Empire was established at this time. Christians were burned as human torches, thrown to mad dogs, and slain in other grotesque fashions. And such persecutions were continued at intervals and spread throughout the Empire by nine of Nero’s successors over the next two hundred and fifty years.

But just as a persecution of the *Israelites* in Egypt resulted in their multiplying and growing ([Exodus 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+1.12&t=NKJV)), thus it was with a persecution of Christians. Beginning under Jewish persecution and continuing under Roman persecution, the Church experienced phenomenal growth. Through the persecution and scattering of zealous, missionary-minded Christians, the gospel message was spread throughout a large segment of the Roman Empire as a result of Jewish persecution, even before the persecution under Rome began.

Then, by the year 200 A.D., Christians could be found in all parts of the Empire; and by the year 250 A.D., it is estimated that Christians constituted five to twelve percent of the population of the Empire, a population totaling about 75,000,000.

This is what led Tertullian, one of the early Church fathers living during the time of Roman persecution, to say, “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church*.”

Not all was well with the Church during these years though. *False doctrine* began to make inroads during about the last one hundred fifty years of Roman persecution. *Gnosticism* made its appearance in the Church during this time. *The Origen school of interpretation* then followed (Origen’s system of theology resulted in the influence of an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, with its inherent amillennial eschatology). *The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes* (a priestly class elevated to a position over the common people) was also becoming widespread.

Then, toward the latter part of this period (about the last fifty years), the Church began to become *wealthy*. In fact, by the close of this period, Christianity had become the richest religious organization in the Roman Empire.

Thus, as a whole, by the time of Diocletian (the last of the persecuting emperors [284-305 A.D.]), the Church was not at all the same as it had been during the period of early Roman persecution under Nero. In one sense, the Church was ripe for *the greatest tragedy* that has ever befallen Christianity, a tragedy that some historians, who do not understand Christianity at all, have erroneously called, “The Triumph of Christianity.”

The persecuting edicts of Diocletian were repealed during the opening years of the fourth century by Constantine the Great after he came into power, and Christianity was then regarded as simply another religion in the countries over which Rome ruled. This move by Constantine set the stage for a succeeding move having far-reaching ramifications:

The day came when Constantine (for reasons upon which historians differ) embraced Christianity, an act subsequently followed by his efforts to force Christianity on the Empire as *its one and only religion*.

These efforts of Constantine began a sequence of events that, during the latter part of the century, ultimately resulted in *a complete merger of Church and State*. In the year 380 A.D., Theodosius I issued an edict that made Christianity *the exclusive state religion*; and in the year 395 A.D. Christianity was finally recognized as *the official and only religion of the Roman Empire.*

Christianity then found itself completely enmeshed within a world power in the sphere of governmental authority over which Satan exercised control, completely out of line with God’s plans and purposes for the new creation “in Christ.”

*Rather than Christianity converting the world, the world had converted Christianity.*

It is this position, assumed by the Church, beginning during the time of Constantine, that some have erroneously called, “The Triumph of Christianity,” when, in fact, it was just the opposite. The “Triumph” was on Satan’s part, not Christendom’s part.

Satan then had the Church *exactly where he wanted it*. Where *the pagan persecuting emperors failed* (although not completely, for Christianity was gradually corrupted during their reign), *the so-called Christian emperors succeeded*. Satan had attacked the Church from *without* during the reign of the persecuting emperors; but once the persecutions stopped and Christianity began to be *one with the state,* the attack by Satan then *came from within.*

BEYOND ROME TO THE PRESENT

It took Satan about three and one-half centuries to bring the Church completely within his sphere of governmental control. Then, what is referred to as “The Dark Ages” (an expression, not “ages” per se) in Church history rapidly ensued, lasting for over one thousand years; and even though the Reformation (16th century, with a subsequent restoration of great prophetic truths [17th-20th centuries, attaining fruition in the 19th and 20th centuries]), followed “The Dark Ages,” the Church as a whole has never really departed from the position it began to assume during the time of Constantine. Segments of Christendom have stood apart, *but not the Church as a whole*; and this continues to be the case even today.

1) IT BECOMES A TREE

The parable of the grain of mustard seed in [Matthew 13:31-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31-32&t=NKJV) reflects upon the position in which the Church has found itself since the time of Constantine. *The mustard seed*, “*the least of all seeds*,” was to germinate, grow, and become “*greater than the herbs*.”

However, the mustard seed in the parable germinated, experienced an *unnatural growth*, and became “*a tree*.” Not only this, but following the germination and growth of the mustard seed into a tree, “*the birds of the air*” came and *lodged in its branches*.

“A tree” in Scripture symbolizes *a national power.* In [Judges 9:8-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Judges+9.8-15&t=NKJV), which relates the oldest known parable in the world, “trees” represent nations that sought to elect a king to reign over them.

[Daniel 4:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.10-12&t=NKJV) refers to a vision of “*a tree in the midst of the earth*,” having *a great height* which “*reached to the heavens*.” The interpretation of the vision is given later in the chapter ([Daniel 4:20-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.20-22&t=NKJV)), and “*the tree*” is said to symbolize *the kingdom of Babylon*. Babylon had grown strong, its greatness reached to heaven, and its dominion reached to the ends of the earth.

Then in [Luke 21:29-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+21.29-32&t=NKJV), Christ not only referred to *the nation of Israel* under the symbolism of “*a fig tree*” (*cf.* [Matthew 21:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.18-19&t=NKJV); [24:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.32&t=NKJV)), but He also referred to *Gentile nations* under the symbolism of “*all the trees*.”

(Refer to Chapter 8 in this book for information on “the fig tree” and “all the trees: [Bible One – Prophecy on Mount Olivet, The Fig Tree, Ch. 8, by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/POMO_08.htm).

Also, refer to the author’s book, [Bible One - Mysteries of the Kingdom by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/MK.htm), for additional information on the parables in Matthew chapter thirteen.)

There can be no question concerning Scripture identifying “trees” in a symbolic sense with *national powers*; and this fact, along with the fact that the grain of mustard seed (another symbol) germinated and subsequently experienced an unnatural growth, must be understood to correctly interpret [Matthew 13:31-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31-32&t=NKJV).

The next thing to note is the fact that after *the national power* appeared, “*the birds of the air*” found places to lodge *within that power*. Again, one is not left to his own understanding to ascertain the interpretation. In [Matthew 13:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.4&t=NKJV), in the first of the seven parables in this chapter, “*the birds*” came and devoured the individuals “*sown by the wayside*” (literal understanding derived from [Matthew 13:19 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=ASV); these are Christians sown at specific places in the world, with a view to their bringing forth fruit [[Matthew 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.8&t=NKJV)]). Then in [Matthew 13:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=NKJV), in the interpretation of this parable, “*the birds*” from verse four are identified with “*the wicked one*.”

The words “*birds*” in [Matthew 13:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.4&t=NKJV) and in [Matthew 13:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.32&t=NKJV) are translations of the same word in the Greek text, and understanding these parables in the light of one another, the “*birds*” which found a place to rest in the branches of the tree can only be identified with *the agents of Satan*. That is, after that which is represented by the grain of mustard seed germinated, took an unnatural growth, and became a world power, the agents of Satan simply moved in. Through *an unnatural growth*, following the germination of the grain of mustard seed, *the agents of Satan found a natural place to lodge.*

Now, note what must be looked upon as the overall interpretation, which will reveal the identity of that which is represented by the grain of mustard seed. Interpreted in the light of the two preceding parables (which are explained in the text), only one thing can be in view. The first two parables concern Satan’s move against Christianity, and it is no different in the third parable. The grain of mustard seed, the object of attack in the parable, can only represent the Church that, somewhere along the way, experienced an unnatural growth and became a world power, something it was not supposed to become at all. And there is only one place in history to which an individual can go to show the fulfillment of such an event.

This is what began to occur during the time of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century, reaching its consummation in the latter part of the century when Christianity was declared to be *the official and only religion of the Roman Empire.*

*The Church was wed to the world.* The Church, by and through its association with a world power after this fashion, was looked upon as being *one with that power*; and Satan, with his agents, found it to be *a very natural thing to simply move in and begin exercising some measure of control.*

Note the sharp contrast between the work of Satan in [Matthew 13:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.4&t=NKJV) and his work in [Matthew 13:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.32&t=NKJV). In the former verse, Satan devoured Christians (*cf*. [1 Peter 5:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.8-9&t=NKJV)); but in the latter verse, there was no need for Satan to devour them. The Christians in this verse had joined his ranks, and *he, along with his agents, simply positioned himself among them*. They were no longer in a position to bring forth fruit by and through bearing a true witness concerning the kingdom; and he, as a consequence, simply left them alone.

2) IT REMAINS A TREE

Within the scope of the parables in Matthew chapter thirteen, once a course of action had been taken, there was no turning back (*e.g*., “*till it was all leavened*” in the parable of the leaven [[Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)]); and once fruition had been attained, the text appears to clearly indicate that *no change would occur throughout the remainder of the dispensation in relation to that which had come to pass.*

This, then, leaves the final form given in the parable as that form that would carry through to the end of the dispensation. That is, once the mustard seed had germinated and grown into a tree (the final form revealed), it would, from all indication, *continue as a tree for the remainder of the dispensation*.

Not only so, but *the birds of the air would also remain in its branches* (*again, the final form revealed*) *for the remainder of the dispensation*. There is no intimation at all that, sometime during the course of the remainder of the dispensation, the tree could one day become a mustard bush — or anything else — possibly resulting in the birds of the air departing, etc. In fact, such a thought, aside from being contrary to sound interpretation within the scope of the parable, is contrary to any Scripture bearing upon the course of Christianity throughout the dispensation.

(The dispensation would end with Christendom completely leavened, as seen in the Matthew thirteen parables; or, presented another way in Scripture, the dispensation would end with Christendom in a Laodicean state [“. . . *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*”], as seen in [Revelation 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV).

And the Church at the end of the dispensation, during the day in which we live, is so blinded to the position that it is supposed to occupy that Christians forming these local churches have little to no understanding of that which has occurred and continues to occur, with the end result seen [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV):

*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith* [*lit*., ‘the faith’] *on the earth?*

“The faith” has a peculiar reference in the New Testament to the Word of the Kingdom; and the way in which the question is worded in the Greek text of [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV), a negative response is indicated. That is, when the Son of Man returns, he is not going to find “the faith” being taught in the churches of the land, liberal and fundamental churches alike [this is the one place where the two find common ground; *neither* will have anything to do with the Word of the Kingdom].)

Within the symbolism of “*a tree*” — from the time of Constantine to the present time — Christendom has found and continues to find itself exactly where Satan wants it.

Christendom has been and continues to be associated with “*a tree*,” *a world power* (which would have to be *Gentile world power* during the present dispensation).

Now, how does all of this continue from the time of Constantine even unto today? How, or in what manner, is Christianity still associated with Gentile world power, which would have to be the case with the continuing symbolism of the tree in [Matthew 13:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.32&t=NKJV)?

The matter is evident on every hand, but it is something that is possibly *even more deceptive today than at any other time in history.* After all, the “*leaven*” which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) has been working for almost two millennia, and Satan has been allowed the same length of time to sharpen the cutting edge of his master plan.

Over a period of hundreds and hundreds of years, Satan, in progressively carrying out his plans and purposes, has created such confusion that no segment of Christendom has escaped unscathed (*cf.* [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV)). Those from the liberal wing and fundamental wing have, *both alike*, fallen prey to the wiles of Satan in the area of world government, as he has continued to foster the association of Christians with that which is symbolized by “*a tree.*”

The crux of the plan of Satan is to involve Christians *in the present kingdom*, an involvement that can only *detract* from the things in which they are supposed to be involved — things having to do with *the coming kingdom*. *The coming kingdom of Christ* is symbolized in Scripture by “*a great mountain*” or “*a high mountain*” ([Isaiah 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.2-4&t=NKJV); [Daniel 2:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV); [Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV)), and *the only escape* for Christians in the world today is to go “*to the mountain*.” In fact, it is, “*Escape for your life* [‘soul’]” ([Genesis 19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.17&t=NKJV)).

There is no such thing as a Christian being actively involved in both “*the tree*” and “*the great mountain.*” When a Christian becomes interested in “*the tree*,” he loses interest in “*the great mountain*,” and vice versa.

Thus, the great deception of Satan revolves around his efforts to keep the Christians’ attention centered on *the present “tree”* rather than upon *the coming “great mountain”*; and this deception has been present and effectively executed for hundreds of years.

Never in modern times has Satan’s deception in this area been more clearly exhibited in this country than in the presidential campaign of 1960. Churches throughout the land, seemingly from every denomination, comprised of *literally* millions of Christians, became very active — not within the sphere of *the Christians’ calling*, which is both *heavenly* and *future* (associated with “*the great mountain*”) — but within the sphere of *present world government upon the earth* (associated with “*the tree*”). Christians throughout these churches sought to tell the world that God didn’t want a certain man in the highest office in this land because he was a Roman Catholic (a “double play” on the whole matter — *Christians telling the world how to conduct its affairs, and a major world religion* [*Christian associated*] *being a determining factor in Christians seeking to direct the course of Gentile world power*).

But all was for naught; God saw fit to place this man in office anyway ([Daniel 4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.17&t=NKJV), [25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.25-26&t=NKJV)), in spite of what His household servants had previously sought to do about the matter — household servants who were supposed to have been conducting their affairs in the realm of that which the Householder had left in their charge but, instead, had associated themselves with “*the tree*” and had been conducting their affairs in *a completely wrong realm.*

And it is little different today. One of the great cries one hears day after day after day over the religious radio stations and religious TV broadcasts, especially within what is recognized as “fundamental Christianity,” is the call for an increased association of Christians with world government. Christians on every hand are continually being exhorted to involve themselves within the political structure of this present world system.

They are being exhorted to band together for purposes of becoming a powerful force or voice in the present system, and a Christian who doesn’t follow suit is looked down upon as being among the uninformed.

Once again, it would *not* be “The Triumph of Christianity” should Christians find themselves controlling, after any fashion, Gentile world power today. In fact, as with the association of Christianity and Rome, beginning during the time of Constantine, it would be just the opposite. Modern-day Christian thought relating to the association of Christians with the state would not have been welcomed at all within the Church until at least the latter part of the second century. Then, by the fourth century, the thought of Christians associating themselves with the present government of the earth would have been right at home in the Church, as it continues to exist today.

All that those, who are exhorting Christians to become involved in the political structure of this present world system, are doing is encouraging Christians to *forsake their high calling and become involved in matters totally unrelated to their calling*. Such is, in reality, an encouragement for Christians to involve themselves in affairs related to *the wrong kingdom* — the present kingdom of Satan rather than the coming kingdom of Christ.

Resultantly, should Christians find themselves exercising any measure of control in present Gentile world government — influencing legislation, holding office, etc. — they would only find themselves exercising a measure of control in *an alien realm*, *a control not becoming their high calling at all.*

UNLAWFUL STRIVING

*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

*And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules* [KJV: ‘*lawfully*’]. ([2 Timothy 2:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.4-5&t=NKJV))

Christians involving themselves with the “*affairs of this life*” are not striving lawfully. Jesus specifically stated that His kingdom was “*not of this world* [present world system under Satan].” Christ did not call upon His servants to involve themselves on His behalf in the world system then, and He does not call upon His servants to involve themselves on His behalf in the present world system (which is still *the same system*).

*If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight . . . but now My kingdom is not from here.”* ([John 18:36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+18.36&t=NKJV)).

The Christians’ warfare is in an entirely different realm. This warfare is clearly revealed to be against spirit beings in the heavens, the rulers of the present kingdom, the ones presently ruling the earth through the Gentile nations:

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age* [*lit*., ‘against the world rulers of the present darkness’], *against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*. [*lit.*, ‘against the spirit forces of wickedness in heavenly places’]. ([Ephesians 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Ephesians 6:10-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.10-18&t=NKJV))

*Lawful striving is in this sphere*, not within the sphere of world government upon the earth (*cf.* [Matthew 6:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+6.33&t=NKJV)); and a man will be crowned only after striving in the correct realm. One of the surest ways for a Christian to disqualify himself for a crown and position with Christ in His kingdom is by and through unlawful striving, striving in the wrong kingdom.

The entire world system under Satan is presently in its death-throes and is to be destroyed by Christ Himself when He returns. Christians having works associated with the present system will one day see their works suffer the same fate that the system is about to suffer. Such works will be *destroyed*, burned “*in fire*” at the judgment seat. And even though such Christians will be “*saved* [eternal salvation]; *yet so as by* [‘through’] *fire*” ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV)), they will be left with *nothing of value in relation to the coming kingdom of Christ.*

LAWFUL STRIVING

*Fight the good fight of faith* [‘Strive in the good contest of the faith’], l*ay hold on eternal life* [‘lay hold on life for the age’ (saving of the life/*soul* in relation to the Messianic Era)], *to which you were also called* . . . . ([1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV))

Christians are spoken of in Scripture as contestants in a race ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV)). The word “*competes*” in [1 Corinthians 9:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.25&t=NKJV) and the word “*fight* [‘strive’]” in [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV) are from the same word in the Greek text. This word is *agonizomai*, from which we derive our English word “agonize.” Christians are to strain every muscle of their being as they strive to be victorious in the race.

The object in view in [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV) is a “*crown*”; and in [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV), the object in view is “life for the age,” described in [1 Timothy 6:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.19&t=NKJV) as “*that which is really life*” (literal translation). “Life for the age,” or “that which is really life,” has to do with the *salvation of the soul/life*; and “crowns” will be worn by those who *realize this life*. These are the ones who will occupy positions as *co-heirs* with Christ, *reigning as crowned rulers with Him during the coming age.*

“Lawful striving” is *running the present race of the faith in the proper manner.*  “The faith” has to do with *the things surrounding one’s calling; it has to do with that heavenly land, one’s inheritance, that which is really life*. Running in this race involves *proper preparation* (*cf.* [James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:5-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.5-11&t=NKJV); [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV), [20-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.20-25&t=NKJV)) and *an engagement of the correct enemy, after the correct fashion, in the correct realm* ([Ephesians 6:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11-18&t=NKJV)). The “goal” in view is victory and the subsequent *realization of one’s calling.*

A Christian can *overcome*, or a Christian can *be overcome*; a Christian can *strive lawfully*, or a Christian can *strive unlawfully*. These are facts that must be recognized in the present race of the faith.

Victory comes through *lawful striving alone*, for a man is “*not crowned unless he competes according to the rules* [KJV: ‘*strive lawfully*’].” ([2 Timothy 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.5&t=NKJV))

*Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* ([1 Corinthians 9:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24&t=NKJV))

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[Bible One - Prophecy on Mount Olivet, Anti-Christian, Appx. 2, by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/POMO_A2.htm)