

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Government Through Early Christian Eyes (15–20 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Students determine what early Christians believed the purpose of government was, compare their ideas with Scripture, and identify themes that appear repeatedly in both.

Instructions

1. Put students in pairs/small groups.
2. Allow 8–10 minutes for groups to complete the activity.
3. Discuss as a class via volunteers.

Discussion/Debrief

Students should discover several recurring themes:

- Government is ordained by God.
- Government should execute justice and judgment.
- Government should restrain violence, theft, and oppression.
- Christians should generally obey lawful rulers.
- Loyalty to God comes before loyalty to earthly rulers.
- The purpose of government is primarily the punishment of evildoers and the protection of the innocent, closely reflecting Romans 13:3–4, 1 Peter 2:13–14, Jeremiah 22:3, and Ezekiel 45:9.

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For each quote by an early (first- through third-century) Christian, (a) summarize the quote in one sentence, and (b) match the quote to one or more of the passages below; explain the match in one sentence.

Bible Passages (Fill in the Blanks):

- “[D]eliver the _____ out of the hand of the _____ (Jeremiah 22:3).
- “Remove _____ and _____, and execute _____ and _____” (Ezekiel 45:9).
- “For rulers are not a _____ to good works, but to the _____...he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13:3–4).
- Governors are sent “for the _____ of _____” (1 Peter 2:13–14).

“Earthly rule, therefore, has been appointed by God for the benefit of nations...that under fear of human rule men may not eat each other up like fishes” (Irenaeus).

Summary:

Bible Verse Match and Why:



“We worship God alone, but in other things we gladly serve you” (Justin Martyr).

Summary:

Bible Verse Match and Why:

“We pray for all the emperors, that God may grant them long life, secure dominion, a safe home, brave armies, a faithful senate, an honest people” (Tertullian).

Summary:

Bible Verse Match and Why:

“The just man will not deprive anyone of his property by violence” (Lactantius).

Summary:

Bible Verse Match and Why:

“Justice teaches men not to oppress others” (Lactantius).

Summary:

Bible Verse Match and Why:

Working together, write a single sentence that summarizes what these early Christian writers believed government should do.