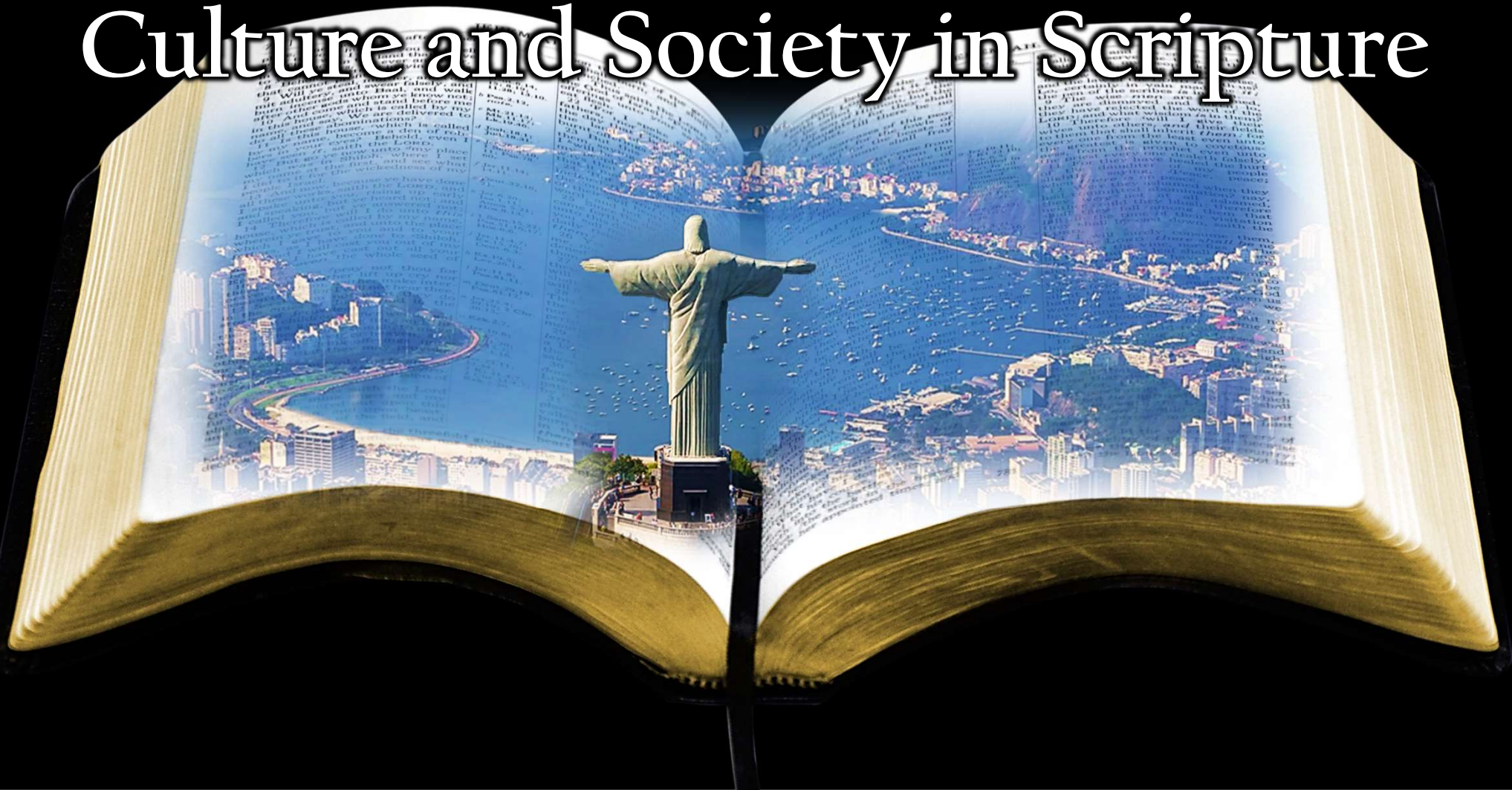


Culture and Society in Scripture



Defining Culture and Society

- Culture is the shared beliefs, values, morals, manners, customs, etc.; of a particular civilization, nation, ethnic people, or other social group, which are passed down from generation to generation. A culture is the complete way the members of a social group understand, approach, organize, and express their lives.



Defining Culture and Society

- A “society” is a nation or other established & continuing group of interacting people who share a common culture and form of government.
- As a useful simplification, we can understand society as the container and culture as the contents.



The Cultural Mandate

- **The cultural mandate is the command God gives to humanity in Genesis: “God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth’.” (Genesis 1:28; ESV).**
- **The cultural mandate is repeated to Noah and his family in Gen. 9:1.**

The Cultural Mandate

- The cultural mandate was given to all humanity, as created in God's image, to glorify God and to exercise his dominion on the Earth by using our God-given endowments & abilities.
- Society and culture are the outflow of God's cultural mandate to mankind.
- Every manifestation of human culture expresses that we are both made in God's image (Gen. 1:27) & also corrupted by sin (Gen. 6:14; Rom. 3:9-18; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Pet. 1:4).



Christ and Culture

- Christ is sovereign over all aspects of every culture (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-20); how this sovereignty is manifested is a much-debated topic.
- Christ's sovereignty implies that “neutral secularity” is an impossible myth. Secularism, as Christianity, is a worldview, with a belief system & a mission to influence culture.



Christ and Culture

- Christians have a calling & a responsibility to influence culture (see Jer. 29:5-7; Mt. 5:13-16) towards the biblical vision of *shalom*. This includes every aspect of culture & extends to politics (see Dan. 4:27; Matt. 14:3-4; Acts 24:24-25).
- A primary way Christians influence a culture is by being an alternative culture (Jn 13:35; Eph. 4:1-6)

Christ and Culture

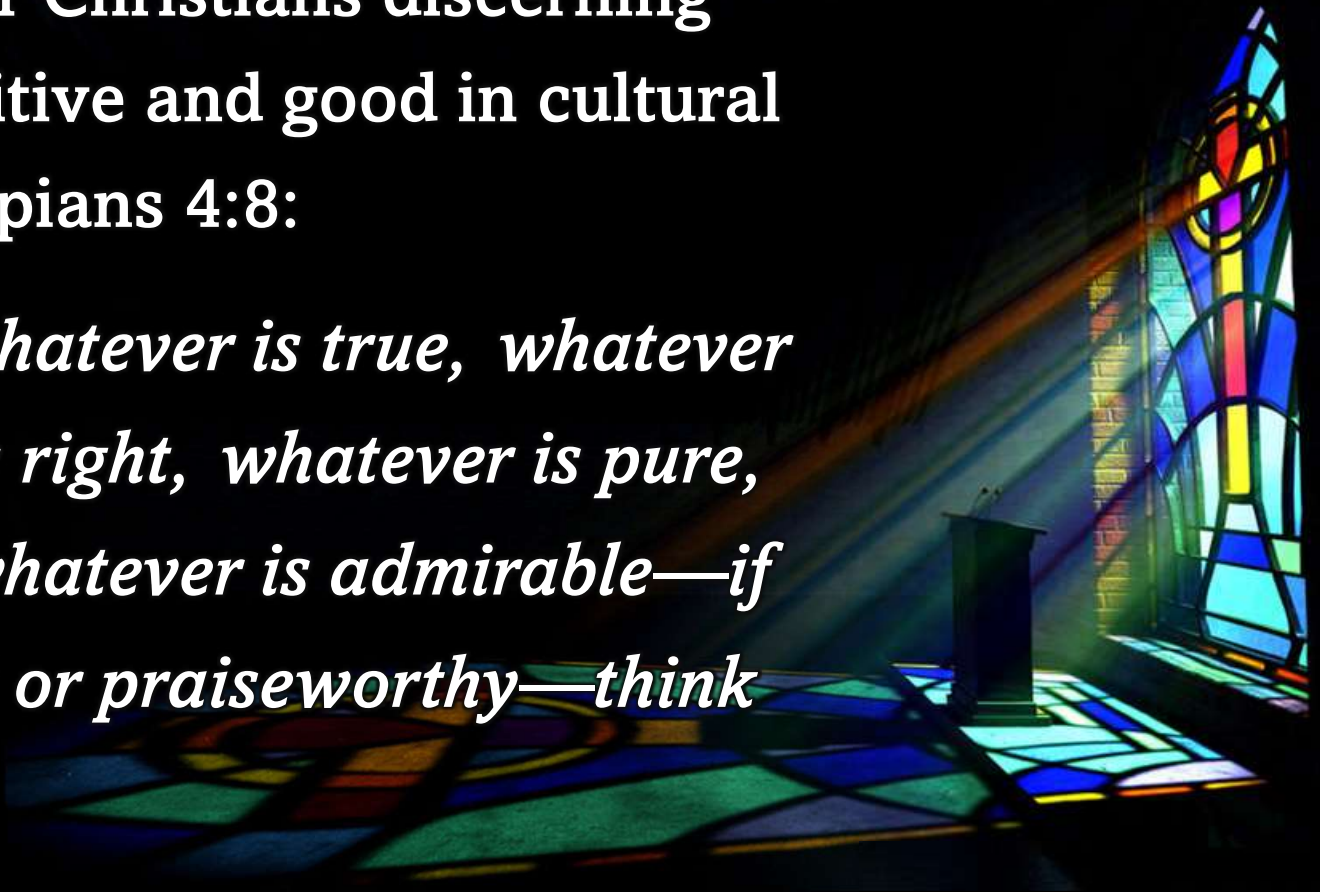
- At the same time, Christians should avoid being influenced & by the negative aspects of the culture in which they live (see Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 5:1-12).



Christ and Culture

- A useful guideline for Christians discerning what is or is not positive and good in cultural expressions is Philippians 4:8:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”



Church and State

- God's role for government is to establish peaceful order, restrain evil, and execute justice (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).



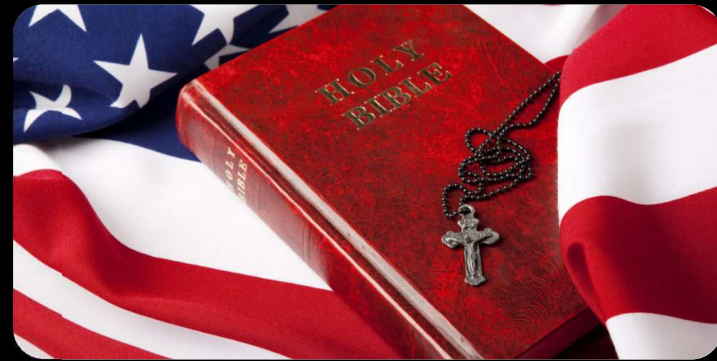
Church and State

- Christians should “submit ... to the governing authorities” (Rom. 1:1; see 1Pet. 2:13). However, such submission has limits. Where the state commands Christians to do something God forbids or forbids something God commands, Christians “must clash with the state and suffer the consequences” (Carson; see Acts 4:18-20).



Church and State

- The state has a legitimate “sphere of influence” which Christian should respect and can participate in, especially in a democratic state.
- However, Christians’ citizenship and ultimate allegiance is not with any state or nation, but with God and his kingdom (see Phil. 3:20-21).



Church and State

- The meaning and application of the principle of the “separation between Church and state” are controversial. But both the 1st amendment to the constitution & T. Jefferson’s reference indicate that the principal was not intended to utterly “privatize” religion, completely secularize the state, or restrict Christians from influencing government and politics.



“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . ”